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Vernacularization of literacy
The Telugu experiment

M. W. S. DE SILVA
University of York, U. K.

INTERNATIONAL TELUGU INSTITUTE
HYDERABAD–500 027
ANDHRA PRADESH
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Vernacularization of Literacy–The Telugu Experiment

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Literacy is one of the important topics of great interest not only to linguists but also to educationists and Social Scientists. Dr. De Silva is a reputed scholar with genuine and creative interest in the linguistic and socio-political aspects of the problems it poses. It was a matter of pride and pleasure for us when Dr. De Silva approached our Institute with a request for a short term fellowship to enable him to stay at Hyderabad while he gathered data for the present monograph. It was kind of him to make available his monograph to the Institute for publication.

Dr. De Silva has brought out in this monograph several interesting points which form a basis for further study and give us a fine backdrop for our present efforts to achieve ambitious targets under Adult Education Programmes.

I hope this work would be received well by the various Scholars interested in the problems of literacy.

I am thankful to Messers Shivaji Press for neat execution of the book and to Dr. N. Sivarama Murty for seeing this through the Press.

Hyderabad
Date 23-4-79.

M. Ramappa
Director

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Although I have had to repeat here some things I have already said in my *Diglossia and Literacy* (De Silva 1976a) I have endeavoured to keep repetitions to a minimum. This book must therefore be taken essentially as a follow up to it. In working for *Diglossia and Literacy*, I deliberately left out the Telugu community. There were two major reasons for this. Firstly, for collecting my data I chose one example of each type of diglossia, and chose Sinhalese to represent the Telugu-Sinhalese type. Secondly, at the time I was working in India, some decades of discussion on the advantages or otherwise of maintaining a linguistic cleavage were coming to fruition to which a fair segment of the Telugu intellectual community expressed their aversion, and I felt that it would be expedient to postpone work on Telugu until later and take it up independently of the general survey. I am fortunate in that I was able to do this as envisaged. My work in India in 1974-5 was sponsored by a number of organisations, but mainly by the Leverhulme Trust Fund and the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore. My visit to India again in 1976 to examine the Telugu situation *in situ* was made possible by the continued patronage of the Leverhulme Trust Fund and support of the International Telugu Institute at Hyderabad under the wise leadership of the Andhra Minister for Education. The credit for making my stay at Hyderabad one of the most profitable experiences naturally goes to Dr. P. S. R. Appa Rao, the Director and Dr. M. V. Sastry, the Deputy Director of the International Telugu Institute. They are both versatile scholars of Telugu and in them I saw living proof of the fact that humility is a natural sequel to true and deep scholarship.

The few conversations I have had with Sri Moturi Satyanarayana gave me many an insight into his profound vision of the future of language policy in India. I value very much the conversations I have had with two stalwarts of the opposing schools of thought in regard to Telugu, namely, (Emeritus) Professor Divakarla Venkataavadhani of the 'high literary language, persuasion and Dr. Budaraju Radhakrishna a strong protagonist of verna-

cularization. I have had a great deal of support from the school inspectorate and the school teachers who administered my tests in schools and candidly answered the questions I put to them. The various Telugu newspapers wrote embarrassingly complementary articles about me and my work. I would not have been able to complete my survey as planned had I not had the opportunity of working, through his Principal's mediation, with my former pupil, Dr V. Prakasam. It was Professor S. K. Verma who initiated discussions on the possibility of my working at the International Telugu Institute. To all these people and institutions I express my respects and gratitude. Jane Liverton read the entire manuscript and made various improvements in its language and style, To her and to Joanna Trythall who typed the manuscript for the press I am grateful.

M. W. S. De Silva

INTRODUCTION

In a small book entitled *Diglossia and Literacy* (De Silva 1976a) I attempted to sketch briefly the theoretical implications of diglossia studies for linguistics as well as some practical problems that diglossia poses in the field of education. I have had no reason to depart from the conviction explicitly stated there that, while all causes of low literacy in India-or anywhere for that matter-are neither known nor knowable, the diglossic character of Indian communities must, at least in a small way, hinder the cause of mass literacy and, indeed, the propagation of universal *sufficient* literacy (for the term 'sufficient literacy' see De Silva 1976a: pp 11-16). There is no doubt that over-indulgence in discussion and dialogues on the merits and demerits of diglossia cannot in itself solve the ploblem of illiteracy in India, but history shows clearly that every diglossia which has succeeded in spreading literacy across half or more of its population has done so by transgressing the demands of elitist norms and breaking the shackles of pedanticism, thereby admitting the supposedly 'low' grammar and idiom into the field of writing. It is this process that I refer to as 'vernacularization'. Even in diglossias in which vernacularization is not overtly exercised, vernacular influences creep into the literary domain: in all diglossias I have examined there is a sizeable body of material written in a form of language which is neither the orthodox norm nor the vernacular usage but a mixture produced by the infiltration of vernacularisms into the prescribed norms. In situations of this sort, a continued allegiance to the orthodox rules would only be unrealistic. Any conflict between theory and practice like this must be resolved in favour of the prestige norm or retained unresolved only when it could be of some benefit to the great majority. If, however, puristic norms make literacy more difficult to achieve a case must be made for giving way to the actual practice and modifying the theory in that direction. In this belief, and backed of course by the prevailing state of affairs in diglossic situation, I have from time to time (particularly in the 1960's, and implicitly in 1976a) ventured beyond my primary role, as a linguist, of observing, recording and analysing facts into advocating remedial meas-

ures for making literacy more accessible to the vast majority. It is in this context that the Telugu dialogue of the last few decades attracted my attention. During these decades the Telugus and the Sinhalese have had a similar dialogue, perhaps with different emphases, and so a comparative study of the two situations appeared worth making. As the Telugu situation differs from most other Indian diglossic situations in regard to this debate, I have ventured to call it the 'Telugu experiment'.

The reason why it is difficult to achieve universal literacy in a country like India is that the illiterates are not entirely convinced of the advantages of literacy. One example that comes to mind is a conversation I once had with a rickshaw-wala in Hyderabad. He was not convinced that his trade would bring him more money if he was literate. He was of course right there. one does not have to be literate to peddle a cycle-rickshaw and charge two rupees at the end of the journey! He was no fool, however, for he once retorted 'If Akhbar the Great was able to be one of the greatest emperors of India without even being able to sign his name, are you going to tell me that literacy is a necessary attribute?' I reported this and other similar conversations I have had with the peasantry of Hyderabad to groups of school inspectors and teachers, but they could not think of a counter-argument. The general belief in India, it seemed to me, was that literacy is an examination-oriented exercise. Many pedagogues hold the same view-which accounts for inadequate general reading at all levels and therefore the low level of *sufficient* literacy. The notion of 'functional literacy' is very much in the experimental stages. A successful campaign for functional literacy should spread *necessary* literacy (see De Silva 1976a: pp 11-16) throughout the subcontinent: this would be a very worthy achievement, but functional literacy, by its very definition, falls short of the requirements of a campaign for sufficient literacy. In other words, the mechanisms of functional literacy are not geared to impart "an ability to express oneself articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually, and vocationally, both in speech and writing; command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment and enrichment; and to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as well as to what is written." (Goddard 1974: p 21).

Let it not be thought that I am belittling the campaign for functional literacy. On the contrary, I consider any campaign for imparting the basic skills of reading and writing very worthwhile, but I would like to stress, as I did in De Silva 1976a, the need for a campaign for sufficient literacy which would fulfil the ideals I have just quoted from Goddard. For this, the goals of education must be redefined, the excessive reliance on examinations must be reduced and the pedagogues must be conditioned to thinking differently: but all these and many other educational factors strictly fall outside the scope of the present essay.

Some scholars might be dissatisfied that I have called Telugu a diglossia. I must, therefore, define my position. When he first introduced the word in 1959 (Ferguson 1959d) Ferguson chose as his examples four communities in which the prestige linguistic variety was used for serious writing *as well as* for formal speech. Some writers have since interpreted the use of the prestige norms in formal speech as being a necessary attribute of diglossia. If we adopt this position, Telugu and Sinhalese are not diglossias. My own interpretation is somewhat different. While it is true that, in the defining languages Ferguson chose, the 'high' variety is used for formal speech, the more significant way in which diglossias differ from other communities is the mutually exclusive specification of domains. In diglossias, certain domains only entertain the prestige variety and certain domains the vernacular. The two are never interchanged, or, at least, that is the prevailing *belief*. Formal speech, in ferguson's examples, is only one such domain for which the high variety is the appropriate linguistic mode. There are some communities which fit Ferguson's definition admirably with regard to the mutually exclusive specification of domains, but where formal speech, as a domain, does not allow the use of the prestige norm. I consider this difference to be secondary to the more pervasive characteristic of domain specification. Both Telugu and Sinhalese fall into this latter type. There, the public use of language on formal occassions is not coterminous with the use of literary grammar and other related attributes. In each community, domains are graded along a scale of prestige and not all diglossias grade domains identically. While diglossia is a useful cover term for a class of sociolinguistic situation, not all diglossia necessarily

follow the same classificatory means. In fact in De Silva 1976a (pp 17–30; 41–43) I have alluded to some three types of diglossia.

In order to accommodate Telugu and Sinhalese within the general class of diglossic communities I have modified Ferguson's definition very slightly but without harming his classic paper in any way. This modified definition (see also De Silva 1974b, 1976a and 1976b) is as follows :

(a) There is a superposed variety the salient properties of which have been specified by local grammarians, Consequently the divergences between these normative rules and the local or vernacular habits are statable fairly clearly.

(b) The two varieties function in mutually exclusive domains. These domains are graded along a prestige scale which differs from community to community. There is little ambiguity in domain specification.

(c) Both varieties are socio-culturally *believed* to be functionally distinct, and may have clear correlates in the linguistic repertoire of the individual in the following manner : a person who is a native of such a community and has the mastery of the prestige variety also knows the correct social uses of the vernaculars; although the converse is not true the education systems in such communities aim at teaching the prestige norms to all their members.

I have used the word *belief* frequently in the foregoing paragraphs. As I have already said, one interesting feature in the writing habits of diglossic communities is that the average writer often violates the normative rules and creates (inadvertent) hybridisms while at the same time believing, or at least publicly claiming, that he has observed the specified norms. The proponents of high variety norms rarely appreciate that this kind of hybridization is a characteristic of linguistic usage everywhere including diglossias and that diglossias are distinguishable more in the belief in compartmentalization than in the observance of the rules laid down for maintaining the cleavage. The primary objective of this book is, therefore, to take the lid off some South Asian diglossias and reveal some inherent contradictions in these situations. For this

purpose I have chosen some Indo-Aryan languages I know best, particularly Sanskrit and some Prakrits. However, I have done this only very briefly. I have given a little more space to making a historical assessment of how the Telugu and Sinhalese communities have faced the open conflict that their diglossic character has created.

The myth that the language of the classical period is in some sense purer and superior arises out of the assumption, perhaps the inadvertent assumption, that language is the prime symbol of culture and that, in order to revive the pure culture of the golden days, the language of that time must be restored to its prestine form. Needless to say this whole argument is erroneous. It is ironical that in a land whose philosophical tradition has all along striven to reveal the impermanence and transitoriness of all phenomena the belief in language as *state* has taken the place of the fact that language is only a *process*, ever-changing by its very nature and never describable to the fullest extent except in terms of tendencies and imprecise categories of properties. For purposes of social planning and human needs, language must be viewed not as a definitive symbol of a nation imposed upon it by some authority, but as a tool man has made to suit his requirements and keeps modifying as these requirements change. Language is no more a symbol of a culture than its dress habits, music, fine arts, modes of eating and ritual. That language appears pervasive by its wide and constant use should not force us to believe erroneously in the primacy of language : such a belief can lead to disastrous consequences as we see in multilingual communities the world over; diglossia is in some sense a multilingual situation.

CHAPTER I

LITERACY: THE SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Literacy is a relative term. In some communities, and for some purposes such as demographic analysis, the mere ability to read and write the letters of the alphabet is often interpreted as literacy. In highly literate communities, and for intellectual and aesthetic purposes, however, literacy is often equated with erudition; there, a literate person means a well-read person. In such highly literate communities, the ability to read and write the letters of the alphabet, or even the ability to read simple prose (cf. De Silva 1976a: pp 14–15), is not a sufficient criterion for identifying an individual as literate. Nora Goddard's definition of literacy (Goddard 1974: p 21), which I have also quoted elsewhere (De Silva 1976a: p 14). is based on the ideals of highly literate communities:

"In modern education literacy has to be conceived as including an ability to express oneself articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually and vocationally, both in speech and writing; command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment and enrichment; and to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as well as to what is written."

In De Silva 1976 a (pp 11–16, I referred to these two definitions of literacy as necessary literacy and sufficient literacy, a distinction I shall continue to make in this essay.

As the term 'literacy' is interpreted differently in different communities and for different purposes, it is essential that we should start with a working definition of terms such as 'literate', 'illiterate' 'non-literate', and 'pre-literate' on the one hand and of types of literate communities on the other.

First of all, the implications of the term 'literate' are not the same for society as for the individual. There are literate and illiterate individuals; there are literate societies but not illiterate societies. This is an important distinction. The expression 'illiterate'

is only of value where literacy has a social meaning; it only exists along side its opposite, namely 'literate'. Literate and illiterate are categories of individuals in the same society. If in a society, there are some people who can read and write (or who are highly literate) and some who cannot (or who are not literate), the term 'illiterate' can then be used meaningfully to refer to the latter. Or, to put it differently, illiterates only live among literates! In such social circumstances, literacy is a desirable virtue–at least, that is what the literates would like to believe–and many social and linguistic values, many communicative functions, as well as many facets of prestige behaviour are literacy oriented. By definition then, the illiterates are those who lack the ability to participate fully in the society's activities. They may not *want* to take part in the society's activities; they may not *feel* that they are being deprived; they may not *realise* that the social values and norms spring up without their involvement and so resist any attempt to be coerced: this is particularly so where the illiterates outnumber the literates–but it is true to say that in mixed societies of the type I have just described, the illiterates are relegated to second-class citizenship, and, as we shall see presently, suffer certain handicaps without their realizing it.

As far as societies are concerned, there are literate societies and non-literate societies. Literate societies are those in which social values, communicative prestige, etc. are literacy oriented. At least some members of these societies are literate. The entire membership of such a society need not be literate; the important point, or the definitive criterion, is that, in these societies, certain values, norms and linguistic functions and mediations are centered round the written use of language, which is thought to be superior to the spoken form by the literates and the illiterates alike. Non-literate societies, on the other hand, are those which have no writing systems and which, therefore, do not derive any part of their normative behaviour from the written form. Their values are different, and the linguistic functions and mediations in their communication networks are of a very different order. In the pious belief that literacy should or might one day reach all corners of the earth, one may even refer to these societies as pre - literate rather than non - literate : non - literate is a factual term whereas pre - literate is a subjective and wishful term, but, barring this distinction,

they both refer to the same phenomenon. As there are no literates in non - or pre - literate societies there is no social justification for referring to any member of such a society as illiterate : the entire notion is alien to them, lest and has little social value. Members of literate societies do, from time to time, measure non - literate societies by their own standards and refer to the non - literates as illiterate. This reference has some overtones of sympathy, or even a shade of superiority on the part of the person thus referring. The existence in literate societies of both literate and illiterate individuals creates a class of underprivileged people. However, there is no such class distinction in non - literate societies, for, there, literacy is not a socially effective concept. The absence of literacy does not affect social cohesion : this is so regardless of the attitude of literate people outside towards members of these societies.

In brief then, there are no illiterate societies, or at least, the notion is of no particular advantage, for, if a whole society has never had a literacy tradition (or does not Possess one despite possible ancient heritage) the concept of literacy is of little relevance to our analysis and understanding of the behaviour of that society. Likewise, the term 'illiterate' is of little use for labelling the individuals in a non - literate society. 'Illiterate' is a useful term only when those who are signified by that term coexist with literates in the same society. 'Illiterates' is, thus, a name for certain individuals in a literate society. A society is called literate, not because all its members are literate, but bacause its values and communication networks are literacy oriented.

In literate societies, the communication of ideas and information as well as the linguistic modes of aesthetic enjoyment and intellectual pastime take the written form of the language for granted. Communication in detachment is a salient characteristic of highly literate societies. This provides the opportunity for absentee participation such as we witness in letter - writing, news printing, book publishing and so forth. Interfacial communication not restricted to the words that the interlocutors utter : they raise their eyebrows, wave their arms and distort their faces, all as necessary and meaningful signs of communicating their thoughts. When the same thoughts are expressed in the letter, the newspaper and the book, these non - verbal criteria are expressed verbally or

left to the imagination, and learning how to translate the non-verbal into the verbal, or replace the non-verbal with other means becomes an essential accomplishment. This makes writing a secondarily acquired, *and therefore, a specialised art.* As such an art, it develops its own precise norms and techniques from which comes the beginning of its detachment. Redundancy burdens are also expressed differently. The spoken language is characterised by wide varieties of repetitiveness at all levels, particularly the lexical level. The mastery of the written use of language requires the learning of economy in this regard, again, particularly at the lexical level. It is generally believed the languages, in their communicative function, maintain a stable ratio of redundancy at all times (Hockett 1963 : pp 1–2 ; Lyons 1968 : pp 90–91 ; De Silva 1970a, etc.). The written language must then supply adequate devices to compensate for the redundancies of lexis and non-verbal gesticulation available in the spoken use but which are abandoned in the detached and absentee communication.

The spoken word having ceased to function as the sole mode of linguistic expression, various communication possibilities develop beyond the reach of the illiterate individual. The system, therefore, works to his disadvantage. Let us take one example to illustrate this. In highly literate societies that in societies where the vast majority can read and write, the mode of story-telling has specific characteristics which distinguish it from that in non-literate societies. Consequently, the effects of the story-telling are different, too. In highly literate societies, the only purpose of oral story-telling is perhaps the entertainment of the young. In such societies, stories are rather *read* than told or listened to, and in this activity the literary style plays a big role. The story itself has not lost its value. What has changed is the mode of its presentation. More time is devoted to achieving stylistic effect and likewise, more time is devoted by the consumer to scrutinising its impact. Story books circulate very widely and story writers proliferate. In the literate societies we know, literary style has come to stay as a subject of intellectual speculation. This significant linguistic activity is totally denied to the illiterate individual.

In non-literate societies, on the other hand, the linguistic modes of communication only involve the immediate groups. They

operate mainly for the here and now. This is so despite the techniques of memorization and the training of a class of oral reciters. Each verbal behaviour episode is aimed at the group that is present within hearing distance. The personality of the 'teller' is of significance here, and detachment is rarely maintained. As all aesthetic uses of language are dependent upon the spoken word, all stylised usages evolve as speech - bound and physical phenomena. These are all interesting in themselves, and the fact that he is not literate does not deny the individual in a non - literate society the privilege of participating in verbal behaviour episodes. Neither does it relegate him to a position of disadvantage in comparison with some other individual in his society. It is in literate societies that the illiterate person suffers disadvantages of the type I have described.

It is evident then that the organisation of communicative behaviour involving language is different in the two types of society, the literate and the non-literate. I have already mentioned that absentee - participation in the performance of communicative acts is widely prevalent in literate societies. As it is very much the case that no writing system has yet been engineered to record language as it is spoken, all writing systems are, in effect, stylised representations of speech. Irony, sarcasm, surprise, disapproval and so forth, which are competently expressed in speech by gesture and prosody must be shown in this stylised record by the choice and organization of words. As the conventions of writing become established in the course of history, specific conventions for expressing these nuances develop. With the intervention of the custodians of its presentation (such as printers and publishers or appointed scribes) these conventions crystallise. In English, for example, there are codified conventions for the use of distinctive punctuation marks, italics, bold - type, abbreviations, word–division, hyphenation, and so forth. Languages whose written conventions have not had such careful scrutiny, such as Sinhalese or Hindi, show indecisions in expressing subtle nuances. This is largely because since the introduction of printing in South Asia there has not been a system of supervisory overlords to dictate normative conventions : even there, however, a gradual tendency towards forming a normative code is apparent. Certain stereotypical phraseologies also develop in order to replace prosodies and paralinguistic features. These and other conventions

dictate what the normative behaviour should be and guide the writer in his task of recounting and the reader in his task of comprehending and appreciating. These norms being a product of the need for absentee participation in communicative acts, a gulf between speech norms and writing norms begins to emerge at some point fairly early in the history. The consequences of this gulf on linguistic norm specification in literate societies are very interesting.

On account of its availability in a state of comparative permanence, the written document becomes an object of reflection, speculation and discussion among the literate. The written document is in fact, the only *visible* evidence of linguistic norms. It is sufficiently detached and impersonal to be misunderstood as external to the membership of the society. Consequently it is susceptible to interpretation as an embodiment of norms that the society has been given for its guidance by an extraneous authority. The ultimate result of this attitude is that the written usage acquires a power of authority and begins to exercise an influence on the linguistic behaviour of all individuals in the society in question. Consequently, even the illiterate individuals take for granted the correctness and superiority of the written convention: when they make such claims as that they speak a 'wrong' version of their language, they use as their yardstick their hearsay knowledge of the written norm. I should like to illustrate this with two anecdotes which, for a different purpose, I have cited elsewhere also. (De Silva 1976b : pp 2–4)

During my childhood days I lived with my parents for a considerable time in a village environment. The nearest township, which we considered to be the more cultured and sophisticated was no more than four miles away. An illitherate old man, who lived in that township and who was evidently a friend of my family, used to visit us about twice a month. Despite my young age, I was able to identify certain peculiarities in this man's speech which I have quoted in recent years as data for exemplifying a number of ways in which people's verbal behaviour strategies fluctuate between socialisation and alienation. The peculiar expressions that this man used did not result from his being a townsman speaking the town speech but from his wanting, as he was from the town, to adopt superior

verbal strategies in the company of us villagers. It will be evident that he used wrong words, but that did not matter in his case. The reader should not take this as a solitary instance of a peculiar use of language; other numerous examples like this are known to many of us. This, for instance. is comparable to the behaviour of some folk in Afro-Asian countries who, recently returned from England, use apparently 'English' pronunciation habits (often wrongly) to impress the less fortunate native population: each of us in Afro-Asian countries knows of at least one such person!

Sinhalese is a diglossic situation, and consequently the literary grammar and vocabulary contrast with their colloquial counterparts. (For details see De Silva 1967, 1970a 1970b, 1974a, 1974b, 1976a). There are parallels between the Sinhalese situation and other diglossic situations, particularly in South Asia. In Sinhalese, the grammar and the 'grammatical words' (such as 'or', 'but', 'and', 'if', etc.) of the literary usage are not permitted in the colloquial usage: what my old friend did was to contravene this rule. His illiteracy was no obstacle to his hearing and remembering the peculiar literary words in question: like many illiterates in our communities he is sure to have had the benefit of listening to works being read out loud for group entertainment. As he was illiterate he did not grasp the exact meanings of these words and their incorrect use, in fact, resulted from this ignorance.

This man obviously wanted to adopt 'proper' behaviour in our presence. He believed that the use of book words was a necessary part of the vocal aspect of proper behaviour. As it will be seen from the following examples, the meaning of the book words did not apparently matter to him. Notice, first of all, the colloquial and literary equivalents of four grammatical words in Sinhalese:

		Colloquial	*Literary*
1.	'or'	*nătan*	*nohot*
2.	'but'	*numut*	*ehet*
3.	'like'	*vage*	*vănī*
4.	'other than'	*misak*	*mut*

The four literary words given above stuck in my friend's memory as a result of his being exposed to them in acts of listen-

ing. What he did in his visits to us was to say literary *nohot* 'or' whenever he had to say colloqial *numut* 'but' and literary *mut* 'other than' whenever he had to say colloquial *vage* 'like'. This (incorrect) choice of literary words was motivated, at least partly, by his belief that the colloquial usage to which he was accustomed was 'incorrect' (despite his illiteracy) and that correct behaviour demanded the use of literary forms (even incorrectly as here!). As I have already said, this is not an isolated instance of verbal behaviour.

My second instance comes from the diglossic Tamil community. (For Tamil diglossia see Shanmugam Pillai 1965, 1972). This is an anecdote reported to me by two colleagues in Tamilnadu. These two had been invited to a meeting of peasant cultivators to explain to them the efficacy of some agricultural chemicals. As their audience would be illiterate for the most part, they decided out of kindness to give their commentaries in colloquial Tamil. The audience, evidently, abandoned them and walked away in a matter of minutes. Upon inquiry, my colleagues found that the peasant cultivators were disappointed that their speech was lacking in proper demeanour.

Although diglossia highlights people's allegiance to literacy-based norms to a large extent, this behaviour is not restricted to diglossias by any means. Amongst English speakers in Britain, for instance, there is the prevalent belief that 'It is I' is more correct than 'It's me' despite the fact that more people say the latter than the former. When a literate Englishman hears a foreign name, his first reaction often is to have it spelt. I still remember vividly how a chemist in York once apologised to me profusely about the pronunciation of the place 'Heworth', 'You will be able to get it in 'hiwəθ'. I'm sorry we call it 'hiwəθ', it should really be 'hi: wə :θ, that's how we wtite it!'.

All these instances illustrate the 'book - oriented' or 'writing-oriented' normative behaviour that prevails among all members, literate as well as illiterate, of literate societies. To say this is not to deny the fact that individuals in literate societies, as much as in others, base their normative behaviour on the speech of other chosen individuals or groups with which they wish to identify. (See

particularly, Le Page 1978, 1973, 1976). The book basis is an extra dimension in this choice of models for linguistic behaviour. It is this extra dimension that is totally lacking in non - literate societies.

In non - literate societies, the storing of information and 'oral literature' are memory - dependent, and as such they are, so to speak, in a less permanent and less observable state of preservation. The consequence of this is that conservatism is less marked there than in literate societies. The written document has a number of features that the spoken word does not posses. It is available in authentic form for inspection and reference and can be reflected upon at any time. In this sense it has a greater potential for serving as a model than most oral usages of language. In so far as the 'teller' is not physically present, the written document comes to be viewed as impersonal or detached from the community itself, so that it is seen by many as an externally imposed norm for linguistic usage. Seen in this way, it acquires a prestige as an ideal model for group behaviour, and thus the teaching of literacy has come to be considered everywhere not merely as a way of teaching people to read and write, but specifically as a way of imparting good verbal behaviour. It is this influence of the written usage on the education systems of the world that is largely responsible for people's belief that their colloquial usages are 'incorrect'. Education does not have to be imparted through reading and writing. However, all education systems are based on the learning of the three R's. We take this for granted and never pause to reflect upon it. Such is the impact of literacy on our conditioning.

CHAPTER 2

LITERACY AS A TARGET AND A CAUSE OF CONVERGENCE IN LITERATE COMMUNITIES

Linguistic communities are never homogeneous. No two people ever speak exactly alike. For a start, each person has his own distinctive voice quality. People's sentence rhythms, the length and intensity of sound segments in their pronunciation - in effect all features of speech which, according to the grammarian, belong to the surface rather than the deeper structures of language are largely individualistic. The grammarian operates in the belief that, regardless of these differences, there are, underneath, common bases that characterise different linguistic communities and that, therefore, uniform grammars can be written which motivate the communities' verbal behaviour. Recent work in language suggests, however, that diversity is a salient characteristic of linguistic communities and that there is no such thing as a static grammar 'a state of language' is only a fictitious abstraction. (See Bailey 1974, etc; Bickerton 1975, etc; Le Page 1976, etc.).

People's idiosyncrasies in speech behaviour are not restricted to superficial phonetic habits. They also differ in grammar and phonology: this is apparent in dialogues between speakers of the 'same' language on the grammaticalness or otherwise of certain sentences. They also differ in their choice of words. Admittedly, differences in grammar, phonology and lexis are not as frequent as those in detailed phonetics – I have attempted elsewhere to give one reason for this apparent homogeneity (De Silva 1976a: pp. 61–81; 1976c: pp. 8-22) – but that heterogeneity persists is an undeniable fact. The relative frequency with which different people use particular phrases and grammatical rules also differs considerably. If one plots a graph of the most favourite and the least favourite grammatical rules and phrase types in the speech of a dozen people, one is sure to find sufficient diversity in the entire diagram to establish that the grammarian's common rules are only a very rudimentary abstraction for particular theoretical purposes. There is no such thing, therefore, as a *completely* monolingual com-

munity. Monolingualism is a social *belief* rather than a social fact: a monolingual society is one in which people *believe* that they speak the same language; there is no necessary correlation between this belief and the nature of their actual linguistic habits.

The belief in linguistic homogeneity stems from people's sense of allegiance and identity. For various social, economic, political, cultural and ethnic reasons, people want to be recognised as belonging to one particular group rather than another. Within such boundaries they claim to speak the 'same language'. If, however, after further consideration and for reasons not taken account of before, they wish to divide further the previously recognised political or religious unit they cite as a fact in support of their endeavour the belief that, in the new smaller units, they even speak a 'different language'. Britain for instance is said to be a political, cultural and economic entity in which the same English language is spoken. There are various movements, however, which demand political autonomy for smaller segments of Britain. There is, for instance, a small group who demand for Yorkshire a parliament of its own. One argument that members of this group put forward in support of their claim is that they speak a different language in Yorkshire. In this argument, English is now no more 'one' language but a family of languages. Issues such as where a dialect ends and a language begins or, how many dialects there are in a language are problematic : the answers to these questions are more subjective than factual. Examples of such situations are plentiful in India: is Maithili, for example, a dialect of Hindi or a separate language? Are Hindi and Urdu the same language or two different languages? The man-in-the-street's answers to these questions are very interesting and revealing.

As I have said in the reference cited above, people, living in the same community tend to converge in their verbal behaviour as a necessary result of the learning strategies available to them, and as a product of their eagerness to communicate. First of all, being of the same species, their biological learning capacities are similar. Secondly, being in the same cultural environment, their world view tends to be similar. Thirdly - and this is in fact the most important factor in this regard - they share the same linguistic data pool. They 'pour' speech into the communal speech

pool when they talk to their fellow members ; and they take speech out of the same pool, as it were, when they listen to them. (This is somewhat like pouring different jars of paint into a tub and re-filling the jars from the tub. As this performance is repeated, the paint in all the jars becomes more and more similar in colour.) Furthermore, people, in their acts of identity and communion, tend to make unconscious attempts to behave like those with whom they wish to be identified (see Le Page 1968, 1973, 1976), and so even if each speaker begins by bringing into the common pool his own personal brand of data, acts of sharing one another's features would naturally emerge in the normal course of events. Despite this, however, diversity persists in every community.

In their learning of verbal behaviour strategies people frequently identify or set up norms for their guidance. In communities where behaviour is not externally conditioned (as for instance in school) people make their own personal choices and identify as models their peers or people whose verbal behaviour they would choose to emulate for one reason or another. Where verbal behaviour is conditioned by the intervention of agencies such as the education system, further models are chosen or given, and so norms tend to proliferate. Each person develops the talent for deciding which norm is appropriate for which occasion and takes full advantage of this talent both in exhibiting gregarious behaviour as well as in alienating himself from the group. Thus, in addition to the language which he speaks, the rules for which he knows tacitly, each person has an acquired and/or assumed set of rules which is virtually external to him, about which he can speak and the authority of which he can often cite. Le Page (1976) refers to this as of rules or the person's 'language two'. 'language two' here means a second set values and not L_2 of the pedagogical terminology). This is a characteristic phenomenon in language acquisition and use as well as in linguistic reflection and deliberation. This 'Language two' is not *taught* but learnt in the person's experience in his community. The presence of literacy in the community enhances the dentification of 'language two' but it is not essential to have literacy to identify it. The individual's 'language two' in this sense is a tentative notion which he may or may not share with others. It reflects, as Le Page (1976 : p. 9) says

"The knowledge he has of the systems he attributes to various groups he identifies in his community from time to time, towards which he may be drawn or become averse... He may be more conscious of some of these groups, and of some of the rules, than of others: for example, in most communities, some of the forms used by some groups are highly stigmatised by the socially ambitious while others pass unnoticed. There is not always not necessarily, a close correspondence between an individual's stereotypes and the actual behaviour of his model or aversive groups...If one asks a non - linguist informant about what is possible in his language he is most likely to answer with reference to the rules of a model group. Thus it is some variety of the Language Two which One explores through so-called intuition or experiments with test forms, not Language one. In a completely homogeneous language community, of course, Language One and Language Two would be identical. However, there is never any such community: at the very least, young people want to differentiate themselves from old people."

Thus people living in every type of community hold imprecise ideas on expected normative behaviour. People living in literate societies go further, for they are exposed to more describable and better codified, and therefore more precise, rules for their ideal behaviour. Almost all educated Englishmen (and many not-so-educated), who usually say 'It's me', swear by the correctness of 'It's I'. While saying 'different to' or 'different than' they confess to the correctness of 'different from'. Those who say 'Give it to John and I' cite'...to John and me' as the appropriate classroom model. In these instances, the norm is not chosen on the model of any speakers as such, it is chosen rather as a 'revealed' law, revealed through the 'scriptures' of the literary tradition, which comes, they believe, from outside the community, for the guidance of the community's correct behaviour. The literary model is available as a more permanent and more examinable record, and its rules can be both easily cited and conveniently referred to for authority. (The reader must remember that when I say 'literary usage', 'literary model' etc, I mean grammar and phonology and not stylistic matters, imagery and the craft involved in literary composition.)

Despite the availability of a more permanent record of normative usage, everyone's perception of 'language two' is not necessarily alike even in literate communities. The perception of 'language two' is conditioned to a large extent by the person's 'language one', and, as I have already said, individuals vary in their own verbal behaviour. However in literate societies a certain amount of uniformity is imposed upon the people through the mediation of the grammarian and the educational system. After a period of time, therefore, educated opinion will begin to accept certain grammatical uses as the correct norm. Where norms are based on oral use of language, the articulated form is the observer's primary concern. The articulated use of language varies so enormously that it is often hard to re-examine the data for a precise specification. Literary models, on the other hand, are, firstly, more static and, secondly, less widely used or diversified. In fact the literary usages in some societies are so pedantic that they are used exclusively for writing purposes only and follow a uniform grammatical form. The curious fact about literary models of language is that the more antiquated the usage the more reverence it commands and the more the people confess to its correctness, sometimes to the total exclusion of the spoken usages. Ferguson has shown that even the illiterates among the Arabs swear by the correctness of the classical usage which they themselves are unable to reproduce (Ferguson 1959b). In South Asia the Tamil, Sinhalese, Kannada and Telugu communities, and many others, hold the view that the classical traditions are far superior to their respective vernacular counterparts (De Silva. 1976a, etc.).

There are two senses in which literacy and the availability of a literary tradition serve as motivators of convergence. Firstly, there is a greater area of agreement in the respective societies as to the 'correct' usage : this agreement is forced upon the community by the grammarian and the educational system. Secondly, the norm transgresses register-boundaries. Everyone in every society learns something about the best form of language to use in a given situation, but what is best for one situation is not necessarily the best for another; the literary norm is seen as external to this social complexity and is learnt as a fact of a higher order, and from this develops the comparative uniformity that it enforces on the perception of 'language two'.

The more ancient (and therefore the more distanced) the literary rules are the easier it is to codify them; the less they are susceptible to 'contamination' by current usage; the greater are the chances of this being accepted, by the literate members at least, as externally imposed rules of conduct for good behaviour; and the greater is their resistance to change - unlike what may be expected in the normal course of events. The highest degree of convergence of 'language two' is seen in diglossic societies, and I shall now have a brief look at the literacy-oriented diglossias in South Asia as an illustration of this point.

In societies where literacy is only a minority concern and, at the same time, anything above the mere ability to recognise the alphabet requires the acquisition or understanding of antiquated language rules, an 'educated class' emerges with the declared objective of preserving the rules of correctness against decay. There are many reasons why this class fortifies itself against any invasion of 'corrupt' language forms. One is the belief that good behaviour needs strict guidance: in this sense grammar is seen, not as an inherent part of the make-up of language, but as a controller, and the grammarians' job is seen as a prescriptive rather than a descriptive measure, A mild version of this belief is to be found in Dr. Johnson's plan of his English dictionary (Johnson 1747 : p. 32) :

"A dictionary by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened. And though, perhaps, to correct the language of nations by books of grammar, and amend their manners by discourses of morality, may be tasks equally difficult... that it may contribute to the preservation of ancient, and the improvement of modern writers... and awaken to the care of purer diction..."

The British journalist Bernard Levin recently lamented the decay he observed in the English language as a result of people's lack of interest in the classics (Times 20.4.77):

"Within the life of people already grown up, the English language will have ceased to exist for most speakers of it except as a means of elementary communication (for which it will in any case

be proving a more and more inadequate instrument, handled less and less effectively). The habit of speaking and writing English in accord with the principles of grammar, spelling and etymology, which is already confined to a small minority of the population, will be generally regarded as an eccentricity ; the knowledge and love of the language as an entity will be almost extinct ; the man or woman who listens to language as to music will be practically unknown : and when we need to convey anything too complex to be represented by printing, we shall grunt ... now we no longer speak the tognue that Milton spake ... preferring to converse in the vile metalanguage of television personalities, popular entertainers and Members of Parliament ... whatever else has happened to standards of literacy in this country the size of the average vocabulary has steadily declined .. Eventually, the few remaining lovers and users of English will be found huddled together in small and fearful groups... pouring over their disintegrating copies of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Bunyon, Gibbon, Jane Austen and the King James Bible."

The divergence between the literary usage and the vernacular has never been so acute and marked in English as it is in many South Asian languages. Where such greater divergences exist, grammarians and purists take an even harder line than Johnson and Levin, as the following translated quotation from Kumāratuṅga on Sinhalese will demonstrate (Kumaaratuṅga 2481 BE : Intro. p. 1) :

"Nowadays some people seem to think that grammar is irrelevant. To him who suffers from indegestion, food is indeed a nuisance ... In civilized society, however, language needs grammar. If there is permission to violate the law, it will be to the mirth of the criminal. If, for the happiness and comfort of the criminal, social laws are allowed to de violated, civilization would begin to disappear straightaway. (My translation.)"

Two other reasons why the puristic literati choose to fortify themselves against linguistic change are insecurity and ignorance : I use this second word not pejoratively but to describe their unawareness of the nature and function of language as an instrument

of communal interaction. The feeling of insecurity arises out of the fear that new trends, new attitudes, foreign influences and other forces of change corrupt their cultures. The search for cultural purity takes them back to periods of ancient glory and in this exercise recorded periods of literary activity provide them with linguistic forms that are seemingly pure and certainly ornate.

One example of an attempt to fortify a language against change was seen in South Asia soon after the Aryan invasions. This was the activity of the Brahmin grammarians of the northwest of India who made an ambitious effort to restore the Indo-European tongue to the form in which it was first introduced to the subcontinent. The language that their forbears spoke had been changed by linguistic contacts as the Aryan immigrants moved into the more central and eastern regions. Being the inhabitants of the first Aryan settlement these grammarians obviously held the view that they were, somehow the custodians of the 'pure Indo-European' form of their language and did not realize that their own linguistic habits had actually been changed through contact with other languages very early in their history. This is supported by historical evidence which shows that the northwest was inhabited by Dravidians and Mundas at the time of the Aryan migration. Despite the grammarians' efforts, therefore, classical Sanskrit reflects this change in its form. Numerous non-European features in Sanskrit have been described elsewhere and do not warrant a repetition here. What is important however, is not that they failed to revive the 'original' Indo-Aryan tongue that their ancestors brought into India but that their efforts created a firm division between prestige and vernacular usage. The names *Sanskrit* and *Prakrit*, meaning literally, 'refined' and 'natural', are themselves suggestive of their prestige-based division. The linguistic differences between the vernacular and classical Sanskrit have been discussed in some detail by Burrow (1973), Pischel (1965) and Bloch (1965). PaaNini's excellent grammar of the Sanskrit language was the culmination of the activity of the Brahmin purists (see Chatterji 1960) and, PaaNini, whose theoretical insights are undisputed in the world of grammar, established an unalterable model for literary grammar that was followed with meticulous care by the subsequent generations of great poets. This entire phenomenon shows how coterminous the Brahman and

the Sanskrit traditions were, and firmly establishes the supremacy of these two in the prestige scale.

The supremacy of the Brahman and the Sanskrit traditions are also responsible, at least in part, for modern Indian diglossias. Although diglossia in modern India is not restricted to Indo-European language communities, it is significant that the prestige language varieties in the Dravidian group are highly Sanskritized and have come down as properties of Brahman behaviour. In both Kannada and Telugu, but particularly in Kannada, where the influence of Sanskrit is noticeable anyway, the prestige usage is overwhelmingly Sanskritic. Tamil has a greater resistance to Sanskrit as a rule, but here, too, the prestige usage was richly endowed with Sanskrit, particularly in the lexicon, until the recent political denunciation of the Brahman community with the ascendance of Tamil nationalism in State politics. The Sanskritized prestige language variety and the language of the Brahman are believed to be the same in Kannada, and this was also the case in Tamil prior to the nationalist movement. (Since the overthrow of the Brahman prestige as a result of Tamil nationalism, the language has been stripped of Sanskritisms. The irony is that diglossia did not disappear with this, for, in place of the Sanskritisms, the nationalists introduced 'pure classical Tamil' words, phrases and grammatical rules which are even harder for the average man to comprehend. A new linguistic mandarin class has, thus, taken the place of the Brahman, and the diglossic character of the linguistic community persists.)

Until the beginning of the Muslim period of Indian history, there had always been a clear power struggle between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas. This struggle manifested itself in politics and the economy as well as in religion : the birth of Buddhism and Jainism. which contrast with mainstream Hinduism, marks a period of Kshatriya supremacy, for example. During periods of Kshatiyar power, most, if not all, administrative and philosophical works were written in refined forms of local Prakrits – Jainism, for instance, was taught in Ardhamaagadhi and Buddhism in the Maagadhi-based language we now call Pali ; the Emperor Asoka wrote all his administrative edicts in local Prakrits – but, each time the Brahman regained power, there was a restoration of orthodox

Hindu ideals and the use of Sanskrit. Commenting on one such revival of Sanskrit, Burrow (1973 : p. 68) says :

"The epigraphical tradition eslablished by Asoka continued for some centuries. Until after the Christian era Sanskrit too began to appear in inscriptions, at first in competition with Prakrit, and finally in exclusive use. The inscription of Rudradaaman (A.D. 150) marks the victory of Sanskrit in one part of India. In the South Prakrit remained in use longer and was not finally ousted by Sanskrit until the fourth or fifth century A. D. Eventually the use of Prakrit was discontinued entirely and from the Gupta period to the Mahomedan invasions Sanskrit – admittedly often incorrect Sanskrit – remained in exclusive use."

The beginning of the Sanskrit-Prakrit division in which Sanskrit assumed supremacy can be seen in the Vedic-Classical Sanskrit dichotomy. The language that the grammarians codified differed in many ways from the language of the Vedas which is the direct forbear of the Prakrit family. Burrow (1973) devotes some seven (36-43) pages to describing these differences. Similar details are given by Pischel (1965) and Bloch (1965). On the early divergences that the grammarians created between Vedic and Classical Sanskrit, Burrow (1973: p 35) observes :

"From the beginning, from the time of the composition of Vedic hymns and the establishment thereby of a recognised literary language, there was a strong tendency among the Brahmins, the guardians of this literature and of the religious and social system that went with it, to preserve the language against change. This applied not only to the preservation of the sacred texts themselves, which have been handed down with scrupulous accuracy by oral tradition, or to the composition of literary works on ancient models, but also to the language of everyday speech among the Brahmins, and in the royal court with which they were always closely associated. This led to a growing divergence between the language of the educated classes and that of the people, which was subject to a fairly rapid alteration in the direction of Middle Indo-Aryan from an early period.

We have already said that Classical Sanskrit as restored by the north-western grammarians was not an exact replication of an

Indo-European language that might have been spoken at the time of the Aryan migration into India. The major effect of the grammarians' activity was not so much the restoration of the original tongue but a paving of the way for a diglossic tradition. Burrow continues (p 36):

At the same time the language of the elite did not remain without change, in spite of all the influence of conscious conservatism. The classical language as fixed by PaaNini (fourth century B.C.) is a noticeably younger form of language than that found in the Vedic texts, though much less altered from it than the spoken language of the masses, which is known slightly later from the inscriptions of Asoka. We have in fact up to this period two parallel developments in Indo-Aryan occurring side by side in different strata of the community, slow and gradual change in the dominant Brahman community restrained by education and a literary tradition, and beside it a rapid evolution among the mass of the population unhindered by education and tradition. With PaaNini's work Sanskrit in its external form became finally established and no more change was allowed. From then on the history of Indo-Aryan is the history of Middle Indo-Aryan in its various phases (Pali, Prakrit, Apabhramsa) and then of Modern Indo-Aryan. In this evolution Sanskrit took no part, but remained as it was fixed by PaaNini at a period long antedating the bulk of the classical literature.'

In societies which are highly literate and where reading habits are so advanced that reading is essentially accompanied by literacy and linguistic judgement, and in societies where the pursuit of literary activity is confined to the few and closed to the many, there is every opportunity for the literary vernacular divergence to persist unhampered, On the other hand, in societies, which are not highly literate but where, owing to the values dictated by literacy, attempts are made to educate the masses though with limited success, a certain amount of pressure from the vernaculars is brought to bear upon the literary usage. In this process the literary language evolves, producing hybridisms (or as the purist would say, corrupt forms) but at the same time retaining its prestige by dissociating itself from the spoken usages. It is in societies of this second type that a great deal of controversy is met with.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN NORM AND PERFORMANCE

As in most medieval societies, the level of literacy in the Middle Indic communities was very low. Literary activity was in the hands of a small number of people who constituted an elite. As a result of their deliberations literature developed into a highly specialized craft. A great deal of theory was developed to control the *form* of ornate literary expression. For the benefit of the less imaginative writers as well as the commentators, compendia were written describing the rules of grammar and stereotypes for imagery and description. The elitist writers used literary themes not so much to portray the realities of contemporary society as to exhibit their skills in the creation of heroic and romantic poetry. Literacy, in these circumstances, became a specialized art which provided the apparatus for grappling with the intricacies of poetry. Paradoxically, therefore, the less literate the community was, the more specialized the literacy skills were amongst the few that were literate. This applies to the various intricate aspects of literary composition known in classical times, and particularly to the numerous techniques for verbal juggling known as *dushkara bandhana :*

Once codified, the rules for literary composition became rigid and unalterable. These rules were accepted by the writers with such reverence that the codifiers themselves came to be regarded as instruments through whose words the rules had been revealed : all theoreticians are, in fact, referred to as Sages (*muni* or *Rshi*). The linguistic life of the literary elite was concerned with two distinct roles : one was their indulgence in small group literary activity : the other was their day-to-day living and all the hustle – bustle that goes with it. The language used in their literary activities was totally inappropriate for use in daily life where out of necessity they probably spoke more Prakritized languages. While their speech was becoming more and more Prakritized successive generations made a concerted effort to maintain the Sanskrit tradition in their writings. As one would expect under

normal circumstances, their Prakritized speech affected their writings in significant ways with the result that the specified norms and their performances appeared to conflict. This brought about the birth of various forms of 'hybrid' Sanskrit. Commenting on the early ritual literature known as the *BraahmaNaas* Burrow (1973 : p. 44) observes :

"In contrast to the earlier literature these forms are not as a rule archaisms. The difference is rather that their usage is somewhat more lax and careless than that allowed by the strict formulation of the grammarians ... Their language is based, not like the later classical Sanskrit on an established and traditional grammatical system, but on that same spoken language of the educated Brahmins."

This conflict between the acceptance of the need for a prescribed prestige norm on the one hand and the inadequacies in the actual performance of the literary language on the other is evident throughout the history of diglossia in South Asia. Owing to the vernacular influences brought to bear by writers whose mastery of the specified norms was obviated by their more customary usage, the literary language drifted in the direction of the vernacular. This drift was slow but steady and therefore the literary language remained distinct from the vernaculars, so much so that the writers continued to assume that it was still in full accord with the old norms prescribed by the early grammarians. I have already noted that the supremacy of Sanskrit was accepted without question concurrently with periods of Brahman supremacy during various vicissitudes of Middle Indic history. In times of Sanskrit ascendancy there were in fact attempts to rewrite in Sanskrit what had already been written in Prakrit. One example of this is Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. After a profound study of the origin and organization of the structure of this language Edgerton (1953) commented :

"The most striking peculiarity of this language is that from the very beginning of its tradition as we know it ... and increasingly as time went on, it was modified in the direction of standard Sanskrit, while still retaining evidences of its Middle Indic origin. In all the texts, even the oldest ... Sanskritisms are constantly presented cheek by jowl with Middle Indic forms, and often with

hybrids which are neither one nor the other. These Sanskritisms are much too common to be comparable with stray Sanskrit loan-words or loan-forms which may have been occasionally adopted in many a genuine Middle Indic vernacular (p. 4)."

Hybridization of Sanskrit and Prakrit is found in abundance in these texts. It ranges from the use of Sanskritized vocabulary in Prakrit syntax (as in the works of the Mahaasan̄ghika school) to the use of a wide variety of Sanskrit grammatical features with vernacular lexical items (as in the writings of the Sarvaastivaadins). A few great Buddist poets like ASvaghosha did achieve the linguistic and stylistic splendour of the Sanskrit Kaavya format, but their works are outnumbered by the mixed language texts of the lesser masters of the Sanskrit language.

The cause of such mixed language varieties is easy to understand. When a community requires the use of one language (or language variety) for most of its daily activity and, in compliance with some convention, a different language (or language variety) for a restricted purpose (such as writing poetry), some individuals fail to maintain the difference between the two with the same dexterity as others, and, consequently' one language may begin to encroach on the other (or they may both encroach on each other). In the instant pidginization that this process creates it would frequently appear that the more widely used language dominates the less widely used : this is the result of the more familiar format manifesting itself in the individual's verbal behaviour.

Another example of this occurs in the language that I call 'Sinhalese-Pali', or the language of the Pali gaathaas composed by Sinhalese Buddhist monks during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pali being the language of Buddhism, the prestige scale between Pali and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka was similar at one time to that between Sanskrit and Prakrit in the mainland. (Sanskrit made successful bids to usurp the supreme position of prestige even in Sri Lanka, and Pali was often relegated to second place, but this story is irrelevant to the present purpose.) Sinhalese Buddhist monks composed gaathaas or stanzas for use in religious worship, and they are still used on these occasions. These 'Pali' stanzas, as they are regarded, are, for instance, chanted by learned Buddhist

monks and recited by all lay devotees in paying homage to the name of the founder of their faith. The point that concerns us here is the fact that despite the general belief that these stanzas are written in authentic Pali, their language shows a remarkable infiltration of Sinhalese grammar at various levels. On analysis some stanzas even make semantic nonsense as a result of this. One example that perfectly illustrates this curious mixture of Sinhalese and Pali is the jayamaṅgalagaathaa 'the auspicious verses'. These stanzas recall actual events in the Buddha's life and demonstrations of his powers, and are recited to bestow blessings upon participting audiences. They are, for instance, recited at Buddhist weddings to bless the married couple. Some peculiarities in the grammar of these verses are enumerated below.

i. In literary Sinhalese there is a rule which says that neuter plural nouns as subjects of sentences must only take singular verbs. In Pali, on the other hand, number agreement must be observed as singular-singular, or plural-plural and a mixture is not allowed. Each of the verses in the jayamaṅgalagaathaa, however, ends in the line

taṁ tejasaa bhavatu te jayamaṅgala ani

'By that power may there be prosperity upon you.'

Here the subject *jayamaṅgalaani* 'prosperity' is neuter plural, but the agreeing verb *bhavatu* 'may there be' is in the singular-clearly, a Sinhalese feature.

ii. In Sinhalese, deictic pronouns do not take case inflections. In this rule, Sinhalese differs from Sanskrit and Pali where the deictic takes inflections appropriate to the noun it qualifies unless it occurs as the first member of a compound construction. In Pali, therefore. 'by that power' should appear as *tena tejasaa* where both the deictic (*taṁ*) and the noun (*tejas*) are inflected in instrumental singular. In these verses, however, *tena tejasaa* appears as *taṁ tejasaa*, with the neuter deictic *taṁ* in 'uninflected' form. Again, a clear infiltration of a Sinhalese rule.

iii. There is one verse in this set of gaathaas which, if interpreted in terms of strict Pali grammar, is semantically nonsensical.

The author is telling the following story : a woman called Ciñcaa, wanted to humiliate the Buddha. She dressed herself to appear pregnant by tying a bundle of sticks to her belly and accused the Buddha of being the father of the child. The Buddha showed qualities of compassion and calm and established his innocence in the eyes of the public. If, however, the relevant verse were interpreted in terms of the normative grammar of Pali, the only meaning that could be derived would be as follows : the Buddha feigned to be pregnant by tying up a bundle of sticks to his belly and calmly conquered the rough abuse hailed at him by Ciñcaa ! The verse reads

katvaana kaTTham udaram iva gabbhiniiyaa.
ciñcaaya duTThavacanam janakaayamajjhe.
santena somavidhinaa jitavaa munindo.
taṁ tejasaa bhavatu te jayamaṅglaani.

The reason for this confusion is that in Pali, as in Sanskrit, the subject of the absolutive form of a verb must be the same as that of the finite verb (or its equivalent). Thus normative Pali requires an interpretation which would read *munindo* (Buddha) *kaTThaṁ udaraṁ katvaana* (making a belly of wood) (*katvaana* is an absolutive form) *jitavaa* (won). In Sinhalese, on the other hand, this particular constraint has been dispensed with, so that the absolutive and the finite verb (or its equivalent) are allowed to take two different subjects if necessary. The author, under the influence of his own language, assumed *Ciñcaa* to be the subject of *katvaana* and *munindo* (Buddha) to be the subject of *jitavaa*. Most of the rest of the syntax is Pali, and consequently this verse yields a hybrid syntax which is neither Sinhalese nor Pali, or, looking at it differently, both Sinhalese and Pali.

Hybridization is not limited to diglossias which involve supposedly different languages as I have illustrated. The interaction of the prestige and vernacular varieties of the so-called same language also produces hybridisms as I propose to set out below with reference to Sinhalese,

In societies which are not highly literate but in which prestige linguistic usage is systematicaliy distinguished from vernacular

behaviour, the prestige usage is usually in the care of the elitist minority. When education systems impose mass literacy as an ultimate goal upon such societies the elitist usage is generally accepted as the literacy model. Consequently, the bulk of the school-going population is expected to learn and use this elitist form of language whose use is restricted to the literary field and bears little relevance to the learner's life style in other respects. Situations of this kind have two major consequences. Firstly, because of the foreignness of the literacy model, *sufficient* literacy is rarely achieved by the vast majority ; this accounts, at least in a small way, for the level of twenty-five per cent literacy in India (De Silva 1976a). Secondly, and more importantly for the present discussion, the prestige usage moves away from the specified norms as a result of the influence of the vernaculars which the majority of learners use in all other spheres. This is particularly so when the prestige usage is restricted to writing purposes as it is in Sinhalese and Telugu.

The cause of hybridisms in literary Sinhalese are, briefly, as follows. The grammar of the literary language is never used in colloquial speech even on the most formal occasions. The grammar of the colloquial variety is, likewise, not generally acceptable for writing purposes : it is only permitted between quotation marks in novels and reports, in verbatim records and very intimate letters. There have been some attempts to use the colloquial grammar in other writings as well but there has always been a great deal of opposition to this. In this way, the literary and colloquial grammars perform two mutually exclusive functions. As a rule, grammatical categories are more redundantly realised in literary grammar, so that number and person, for instance, which are only marked in the subject in colloquial use, are marked in the subject as well as the predicate in the literary form. Owing to the redundant nature of grammatical markers in the literary usage many deviances take place in modern writings. These violations which apparently are 'errors' (i. e. vis-á-vis the specified norms), are actually a consequence of the nature of the learning strategies available to the individual.

I give just four examples from reputed authors to illustrate these hybridisms :

1. *bhaashaavaka raTaava poliskaarayaku novee* 'The pattern of language is not a policeman'.
2. *aaSaavvaan saha uamanaavan apaTa sihina magin panee* 'Desires and needs appear to us through dreams'.
3. *sitaTa piiDaavak dena siddhiin sihi kiriimaTa apa asatuTu ya* 'We do not like to recall events that disturb our minds.'
4. *dostaramahatun sàmskaarakavarun lesa patkariNi* 'Doctors were appointed as editors.'

There are two rules of literary grammar which these four sentences violate, namely, the 'nominative-accusative rule' and the 'agreement rule'. In colloquial Sinhalese, there is no nominative-accusative distinction in the noun and the finite verb is never inflected to agree with the subject noun for gender, number or person. In literary Sinhalese, however, grammatical subjects are in the nominative case and accusative forms never appear as the grammatical subject. The verb agreeing with the nominative subject must appear with inflections appropriate for its number and person, and sometimes also its gender. In the above examples these rules for the multiple marking of grammatical categories are only partially observed. In sentence 1, the subject noun appears in the accusative case (*poliskaarayaku*). In sentence 2. the subject nouns are in the accusative case (*aaSaavan saha uvamanaavan*) and the agreeing verb appears in the singular number (*penee*) rather than the plural. In sentence 3, the subject pronoun is in the accusative case (*apa*) and the predicate does not agree with it (*asatuTuya*). In sentence less 4. the subject noun is in the accusative case (*dostaramahatun*) and although it is a plural form the agreeing verb is in the singular (*patkariNi*).

The reason for these hybridisms is the relatively redundant nature of the two literary rules. Where a relatively rarely used language or variety of language shows multiple realization of some grammatical categories while the more frequently used language marks them only once, the imperfect user (as most users are) of the former does not necessarily mark them in full accord with the specified norm but achieves them partly and, therefore, erratically. This is a product of memory, habit, and inadequate opportunity

for learning as well as insufficient scope for using the new variety of language. The fact that multiple exponency is not absolutely essential for communication is also a relevant factor.

It is because these multiple realizations are redundant from the point of view of the user of colloquial Sinhalese that literary grammar does not impair the understanding of texts. In all diglossias, it is the apparent excess of multiple realisations of grammatical categories in the prestige variety as opposed to the vernacular, that is redundant from a communication viewpoint. In attempting to understand languages with such grammatical redundancies, people measure them in terms of their usual vernaculars which, for this reason, may be called the grid languages. It seems satisfactory to assume that in comprehending literary Sinhalese (and, likewise, prestige varieties in all diglossias) people ignore the redundant phenomena. From this point of view and in comparison with colloquial Sinhalese, the extra grammatical markers in the literary variety may be regarded as superposed characteristics. In fact history supports the view that they are superposed. I shall attempt to give in the next chapter a social history of the diglossic situations in Sinhalese and Telugu in order to bring into focus the comparability or otherwise of the two from the point of view of the relationship of the literary variety to the vernacular. Suffice it to say that such admixtures have been known in the history of literary Telugu.

The hybrid language texts discussed above are all communicatively efficient insofar as they communicate successfully the themes which they are meant to describe. With particular references to the *gaathaas*. one might say that the linguistic 'impurity' is not thought as impairing their beneficial effects in any way ! Whether it is necessary to draw the writers' attention to classical rules from time to time (as the purists do in these communities) is, therefore, a highly debatable point.

CHAPTER 4

TWO COMPARABLE SITUATIONS: SINHALESE AND TELUGU

As diglossias, Sinhalese and Telugu have several features in common. In both, the prestige variety of language is strictly a literary language; unlike the prestige form in Tamil, for example, this variety is never spoken even on formal occasions. In both, the education systems attempt to teach the prestige variety. As a result of this everyone, from the native grammarian of puristic persuasion down to the illiterate man in the street, has come to respect the literary grammar and regard his own vernacular usage as ungrammatical. In contrast to Tamil, there have been, in both these linguistic communities, various open controversies concerning the advisability of maintaining the literary - vernacular divergence, and the issue has been debated from time to time. The prestige literary language developed in both communities at about the same reasons and with similar repercussions. (For my Telugu data in this chapter, I owe a debt to the *Telugu Report*, to the writings of Bh. Krishnamurti, particularly Krishnamurti 1976, and to the discussions I have had with colleagues in Hyderabad. For further details on Sinhalese see De Silva 1967, and 1974a).

Sinhalese shows evidence of a literary tradition dating from three hundred years before Christ. If we disregard (some of which are fairly long), the earliest *extant* prose work belongs to the ninth century A. D. This is the *Dhampiyaa aTuvaa gaTapadaya*, a prose glossary in Sinhalese which explains some words and pharases occurring in the *DhammapadaTThakathaa*, the Pali commentary on the canonical poem *Dhammapada*. A continuity of a literary tradition can be seen thenceforth. For several centuries all these works were based on the major religious lore of the Buddhists, namely the Jaakata tales and the life and teaching of the Buddha. The period between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries is regarded as the Augustan era of the Sinhalese literary tradition. GuruLugoomi's *Amaavatura*, Vidyaacakravarti's *ButsaraNa* and Dharmaseena'a *Saddharmaratnaavaliya* among the

prose works and King Paraakramabaahu's *KavsiLumiNa* among poetical works are still hailed as the supreme models from the point of view of both language and literary quality.

Telugu lithic records date from the sixth century after Christ. The first available literary work of merit is the translation of some cantos of the *Mahaabhaarata by* Nannaya Batta in the eleventh century. Until recently there have always been distinct periods of prose writing and verse writing in Sinhalese literature, and the two modes have rarely been mixed. Nannaya Bhatta's Telugu translation of the *Mahaabhaarata*, on the other hand, was written in the style known as *campu*, which is a mixture of prose and verse in the same work. Therefore, although the actual number of Telugu literary works written during the period under survey was smaller than that written in Sinhalese, Nannaya's style of composition provides sufficient scope for comparing the prose and verse formats in the two languages. Nannaya's work was followed by further translations of the great epic by Tikkana (thirteenth century) and Erra-praggada (fourteenth century). Notice that, just as their Sinhalese counterparts are based on Buddhist lore available in the prestige language of Buddhism so these Telugu classics are based on the major Hindu epic available in the prestige language of Hinduism. There is, thus, a striking similarity in the choice of source materials. it would be true to say that in both communities the form of the literary language developed not so much to reflect the contemporary society as to narrate the religious lore with a flavour of romanticism and heroism. There also existed in both communities a deep affiliation with Sanskrit literary theory.

In both communities, the language of poetry and ornate prose evolved with distinct formal and stylistic features so that compendia listing and explaining their use had to be written for the guidance of those who wished to enter the field of creative writing. Perhaps most classical grammars everywhere were written with this prescriptive motivation and, from this point of view, the Telugu and Sinhalese situations are not exceptional. What is significant, however, is that in the Sinhalese and Telugu writings under survey a duality of format began to emerge, one predominantly archaic in character and the other allowing the use, in the midst of archaisms, of an apparently contemporary idiom or a more variegated

structure. According to Krishnamurti (1976), this duality in Telugu was a literary variety for use in poetry and ornate prose and a more colloquial variety for use in localized prose. Krishnamurti (1976 : pp 2-3) comments :

"Although some scholars believed that Nannaya 'standardised' the language of his time in order to make it a vehicle of literary expression, it can be shown, on linguistic grounds, that the literary language got stylised for several centuries before Nannaya, and his 'language' only represented a literary tradition which was already becoming archaic ... It is conceivable that one of the upper-class varieties must have developed as the medium of the language of poetry, perhaps five or six centuries before the time of Nannaya. Our assumption is that the spoken language and the literary language of the 11th century had already diverged..."

In Sinhalese, the divergence was not so much between ornate and popular or localized literature as between poetry and prose. These were primarily, though not exclusively, in the areas of graphology, phonology and morphology. I shall only comment here on some graphological differences as exemplification. (For details see De Silva 1970b). Poetry was written in an alphabet of thirty-six letters while prose, which admitted aspirate stops, the palatal and retroflex sibilants, the vowel R and so forth, was written in an extended alphabet of fifty-four basic letters. This extension was partly motivated by the need for representing Sanskrit loanwards in an equitable alphabet. Unlike prose, poetry disallowed the use of Sanskrit loanwards: Sanskritic words were only admitted through normal phonological rules of derivation. Owing to the various coalescences which resulted in the loss of aspiration, multiple sibilation, diphthongization, and so on, it is possible to transcribe the language of poetry in a smaller number of letters. Traditionally, the alphabet of poetry is regarded as the representation of the pure language, a characteristic of which is the disallowance of tatsamas. It is referred to as the *Sudha simhala hooDia* or *eLu* - 'the genuine Sinhalese alphabet'. The extended alphabet of the language of prose is called *miSra simhala hooDiya*' the mixed Sinhalese alphabet'. Even today, the extreme purists advocate the use of the *eLu* for all writing purposes. The word *eLu* is derived from Skt. *Simholo* 'Sinhalese'. The fact that this name has been given to

this particular alphabet shows that it alone was regarded as genuinely, Sinhalese. or purely, *miSra* means 'mixed' or 'contaminated'. Several poets have used the word *eLu* specifically to refer to poetry. E.G. Srii Raahula, in the *KaavyaSekharaya* (l.5) ; *kiyam eLuven maňdak buda aaňda* 'I shall narrate in *eLu* composition' : Vidaagama in the *Loovňa Dasaňgaraava* (5) : *eLuven kiivayi anadara novamin* ' Do not be disheartened that I have said it in elu'. The term *kiviyara baňsa* 'poetic language' has been used as a synonym of *eLu* : this semantic equivalence of 'sinhalese' and 'the language of poetry' signifies the prestige accorded to the language of poetry by writers belonging to the fifteenth century and after.

When a linguistic divergence crystallises, as happened between ornate writings and localized writings in Telugu or poetry and prose in Sinhalese, attempts are usually made to codify the salient features of the more distant variety which has customarily the greater prestige. The function of these codifications is to guide the writers in the appropriate use of language. In Sinhalese, the earliest extant compendium on the peculiarities of the language of poetry was written in the thirteenth century. It is evident that the precise objective of this work; namely the *Sidat sangaraava* was to focus attention on the ways in which the language of poetry differed from the language of prose, (See De Silva 1965 and 1970a). There is no evidence of such a compendium in Telugu at such an early time but a grammar describing the characteristics of ornate prose was written in 1858 by a reputed Telugu scholar called Cinnayasuuri. This work, the *BaalavyaakaraNamu* and its supplement the *PrauDhavyaakaraNamu* written in 1885 performed the same function for Telugu as the *Sidat saňgraava* did for Sinhalese for, as Krishnamurthi (1976: p 5) observes :

"The publication of these two standard prescriptive grammars for the poetic laungage had a tremendous impact on the language attitudes of scholars and constituted a bastion for the defence of the classical language."

Both communities have passed through periods of colonial administration and experienced similar consequences. Southern India was already under the British rule in the first half of the

eighteenth century. The Portuguese and Dutch regimes that existed in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka came to an end a century later when the entire island came under British rule. The British colonial servise in both India and Sri Lanka produced several men of letters who took a serious academic interest in the languages and cultures of these lands. Furthermore, the British administration made provision for the systematic teaching of the vernaculars in the local schools. All education leading to participation in the administrative cadre was in the English language, but the facility provided for learning in the vernacular media produced vernacular-educated native middle class which I have else where referred to as the nationalist triumvirate (De Silva 1974b). In Shils' terminology (shils 1966) they are the traditional religious-philosophical intellectuals. In Sri Lanka, this class consisted of vernacular school teachers, Budhist monks ond Ayurvedic physicians. They have always been a more cohesive and self-contained group than their equivalent in the mainland of India: this difference is significant as will be seen later in this chapter. In Andhra, and in fact in India in general, the comparable triumvirate, vis-á-vis language, consisted of vernacular language teachers, pundits and language-conscious Brahmans. It must be pointed out that in addition and prior, to the facilities provided by the administrations, there were the local *gurukulas* or monastic teaching establishments (known in Sri Lanka as the *pirivenas*) which were designed to promote vernacular literacy and literacy in religious-presitige languages among these classes. Vernacular education of both types drew its pupils from among the less westernized rural populations. They usually felt underprivileged and inferior in comparison with the English educated classes who were better equipped for white-collar jobs. In the meritocratic hierarchy they held a position below the English educated administrators and clerks but above the average vernacular intelligentsia. Consequently, they cherished a two-fold ambition : on the one hand, they wished to eradicate the linguistic supremacy of the supposedly superior group by replacing English with the vernaculars: on the other hand, they determined to fortify their position of superiority over the masses and lead them appropriately to achieve a linguistic renaissance. For this second purpose they appointed themselves the custodians of the purer and better form of the vernacular language. The type of facility that the

British provided for learning in the vernacular and the limited resources that were available during the British Raj for utilising the vernacular created an atmosphere in which the ambitions of this triumvirate could gather momentum.

In the activities of the linguistic-nationalistic triumvirate one can see a simultaneous growth of both nativistic and puristic fervour. These people felt that they were beseiged by the linguistic (and cultural) institutions of the ruling powers and reacted to fortify their own languages and cultures: this is nativism in the anthropologists' sense (See Kroeber 1048: p 437). In reviving their languages and cultures they chose as their targets, not the vernacular usage of their time, but the supposedly most refined form of the local language that was in vogue as the instrument of classical literary activity: this is purism. Nativism led to the revival of Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and Telugu in Andhra. Purism led them in to the Augustan era in search of an appropriate linguistic model. In this pursuit they were supported, and their task was made much easier, by the grammatical compendia that had already been compiled, albeit with a different objective. A fair amount of time and energy seems to have been spent in codifying the classical ĕlitist grammar for classroom purposes: I have already mentioned Cinnayasuri's work in Telugu from the 1850's: Dharmadasa (1967: pp 47-53) has counted some fifty seven school grammars written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of which are reinterpretations of the *Sidat saňgaraava* Thus the impact of purism began to be felt at a very early stage in the vernacular school systems in South Asia.

Prior to the ascent of purism in this way, prose writing in both communities was in a form of language which was evidently very close to the spoken usage of the day. Administrative documents of the colonial rulers of some literary works are available to testify to this. Radhakrishna (1972 : pp. 77-8) quotes reliable authority to show that the Telugu textbooks produced by the Madras Schoolbook and Vernacular Society in the first half of the nineteenth century were written in a form of language akin to that used in the contemporary administrative and legal records. In the Telugu community, Cinnayasuuri's grammars mark the inroad of puristic revivalism. In Sri Lanka, likewise, the works of the early nativists

like SaraNaṅkara (A. D. 1698-1778) and his first generation of pupils were written in a form of language very similar to that of the contemporary administrative documents (see De Silva 1974a : pp 67-73.) It is an undisputed fact that the administrative records in both communities were colloquial in grammar and style. Cinnayasuuri's counterparts in Sri Lanka were the second and third generations of SaraNaṅkara's pupillary succession. They were responsible for the proliferation of prescriptive grammars at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

I must take the concepts of nativism a little further. I have already said that the rise of the poetic language as the prestige literary language in contemporary Andhra and Sri Lanka owes its origin to nativism and purism. Kroeber's definition of nativism reads as follows (Kroeber 1948 : p 437) :

"After two societies have come into sufficiently close contact for one to feel the other as definitely more populous, stronger, or better equipped, so that its own culture is in a process of being supplanted by the other, a conscious preservation effort or defense is produced. Such reactions have been called nativistic endeavours or rivivals. They envelop with a sort of halo the culture that is passing away and attempt to reaffirm or re-establish it, or parts of it."

During periods of colonial rule there was a preponderance of alien institutions which appeared to supplant their native counterparts. In the polities under survey, westernization came to be looked upon as a desirable virtue. The colonial languages, became the undisputed languages of administration and higher education. Any facilities that the administrators made for a teaching and learning of the native languages were of a limited order. Religious beliefs, manners and customs of the colonial masters were embraced by the ambitious sections of the native societies. Alienation from the institutions of the soil became an advantage. In this situation, the traditional intellectuals waged a war for regaining the position of previlege for the traditional values and institutions which once enjoyed supreme reverence.

These traditional intellectuals are one of several types of intellectuals. Shils (1966: p 625) recognizes three classes of intellectuals in Asia :

"The culture of the intellectual classes of most of the Asian countries is of a threefold composition. There is, first, the modern culture which involves an appreciation of the validity of science and of a rational, non-magical approach to the problems of individual life and social organizations; it involves knowledge of some of the main works of modern culture in science, literature, history, and a continuous contact with some stream of modern culture. The second culture is a mixture of the traditional and indigenous with the modern. It is a culture which entails familiarity with the lately metropolitan language, and an acquaintance with some of the main works in it, much of this second culture is in the indigenous language. The products of this culture are an unstylized, matter-of-fact intermingling of indigenous traditional and exogenous modern. The third culture is the traditional religious-philosophical culture."

Where the unified nationhood is concerned, as in the struggle for political independence, members of all three cultures work in unison; here the members of the first and second cultures contribute more substantially towards achieving the desired goals, Where smaller segments of the nation-system are involved, however, they impose their own different values and declare different goals, or even indifference. Since gaining political independence after a unified effort, they differed, for example, in their attitude to the type of governance: members of the first culture strove to continue the British traditions and institutions, members of the second often fought for moderate localization but were divided on this issue; those of the third made on arduous effort to fulfil the ideology of a 'people's government' by eradicating the alien value system. This diversity of approach characterized every sphere of activity, even before the time of political independence. I cite political independence and system of governance only as cases in point. With regard to language, some members of the second culture, unlike those of the first, saw some advantages in the use of vernaculars in the classroom; in some situations (such as Telugu) they even enlisted the support of the first culture. It was left to the third culture, however, to carry this ideal a step further and campaign for classical elitism. While, in this way, both second and third cultures produced an ethos of nativism, the execution of it with a puristic zeal was a third culture creation.

So far I have concentrated on the similarities in the development of diglossia in the Sinhalese and Telugu communities, The parallels in the history of the two situations are striking. The effect of colonial rule vis-á-vis the rise of nativism and purism are similar in both; both communities resorted to the literature written between the eleventh to fourteenth centuries as the Augustan language model; the codification of the grammar of the more élitist elements in these models formed the basis of school grammars in both; the prestige variety was restricted in both communities to writing and a mastery of it was required as a mark of language accomplishment.

Despite this parallel development, the two communities have now reached a point where they adopt somewhat different positions with regard to vernacularization (in my sense of the term). In the Telugu community an all out effort is being made to 'modernize' literary usage. In Sri Lanka, however, classicism still prevails. For several decades, the voice that has been most heard in the Telugu community is the voice of the modernists or the protagonists of vernacularization. Contrasting with this, the most persistent language campaign in Sri Lanka has been engineered during the same decades by the puristic elements. I propose to devote a few paragraphs to examining the causes that appear responsible for this divergence of attitude.

There are two main reasons which one can think of as being responsible for this differenee in emphasis. One is embedded in the structure of the intellectual community. The other is to be found in the structure of the classical tradition itself.

Unlike in Sri Lanka where language discussion has been dominated by Shils' third culture, Telugu language discussions have been predominantly in the hands of the intellectuals of the second culture, Being in close touch with the first culture, these intellectuals have even succeeded in enlisting the support of first culture intellectuals. The reason for this is that the linguistic nationalist triumvirate of the third culture in the Telugu community was numerically smaller than the language-conscious second culture. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, the triumvirate in question outnmbered the very small language-conscious segment of the second culture.

Also, from the point of view of ideology, the Telugu triumvirate was so much less single-minded than its Sinhalese counterpart that they were not heard as a cohesive force. In the self-contained island society, the Buddhist monks, the vernacular school-masters and the Ayurvedic physicians had the same learning orientation in similar monastic establishments, and thus were cultured in the same ethos. The Telugu society was not so self-contained - it was a segment of the Indian nation - and, therefore, the Telugu intellectuals' loyalties were correspondingly divided. This left less room for a Sinhalese-like consolidation of the intellectual forces of the third culture behind the single issue, language. Furthermore, in contrast to the Sinhalese situation, the intellectuals of the second culture in Andhra had the support of the expatriate advisers on vernacular education : this is a class of administrators that did not exist in Sri Lanka. These expatriates and the intellectuals of the first and second cultures shared the same sentiments with regard to vernacularization.

C. P. Brown, who was an expatriate engaged in the publication of Telugu literary works, for instance, once lamented the conditions of language teaching in Telugu schools as follows (Brown 1857: pp ii-v):

"Hindu grammarians, like those of China, neglect the colloquial dialect, which they suppose is clearly known to the student, and teach only the poetical peculiarities. They are willing to aid our studies, either in Telugu poetry of in Sanskrit (sic); they are reluctant to teach us the language of common business . . . Such unwise counsels have disheartened many a student, while others, more submissive, have stored their memories with all the tutor prescribed, and yet remained unable to use the language. J. A. Yates who was an Inspector of Schools since 1906 made a case against the diglossic situation even more poignantly (Yates 1933 : p 24) :

I have never condemned myself for the anger that flared in me when I entered the miserable hovels, as they often were in which the children of the out-castes were permitted to take their first steps to learning, and observe the pitiable waste of time taken to teach them literary forms of words even for such simple processes as counting annas that they did not possess. I could see no reason

for teaching them a language they never would hear from men of the higher castes, literate or illiterate."

The native intellectuals who campaigned for vernacularization expressed similar views. Names such as Ramamurti, Srinivasa Iyengar, Seshagiri Rao and Appa Rao were prominent in this endeavour. Most of these people were involved in secondary and tertiary education, and therefore in the English medium, but took an active interest in their native languages and cultures. Ramamurti who was a College Professor in History conducted many a campaign from public platforms in favour of vernacularization. In doing this he explained the nature and function of language and the need for modernization. Srinivasa Iyengar who was a College Principal established a society for reforming the teaching of Telugu at the beginning of this century, and vernacularization was one of the major aims of this society. Appa Rao, who was perhaps the earliest person to write in the equivalent of spoken Telugu, commented in the first edition of his *KanyaaSulkam*, a book written in the spoken idiom (Appa Rao 1897; p viii) :

"The Telugu literary dialect must be divested of its superfluous, obsolete and Sanskrit elements, and brought closer to the spoken dialect from which it must be throughly replenished. There is not much dialectal difference in the Telugu generally spoken in the various parts of the Telugu country: so a new common literary dialect can be established with comparative ease .

As I have already said, this involvement of the first and second cultures in the national linguistic pursuits was unknown in Sri Lanka. The few intellectuals of the second culture who took an interest in the linguistic and cultural renaissance did so in the company of the third culture : they did not succeed in kindling sufficient interest across the second culture or enlist any support from the first. The bulk of the second culture and the entire first culture in Sri Lanka were characterized by a yearning for the English language and European values. The moderately nativist segment of the second culture was overpowered by the ideological zeal and force of argument that has always been a characteristic of the Sinhalese third culture. The nativistic triumvirate I have referred to above was highly critical of the westernized intellectuals and their irreverence for the symbols

of the nation's cultural heritage. They despised their desire to maintain and emulate western values. Nativists such as Dharmapaala (Buddhist propagandist), Siriseena (Sinhalese novelist), G. H. Perera (Schoolmaster and poet) and Mahinda (Buddhist monk) wrote profusely extolling the virtues of Sinhalism and Buddhism and denouncing the 'degenerate' behaviour of the westernized sections of the community (See Gunasena 1976). The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a proliferation of poetry as well as prose abounding in didacticisms aimed at social reformation and de-westernization. The overriding belief of the third culture was that everything achieved during periods of western rule was corrupt and degenerate. As I have already said, this belief penetrated into the domain of language. Thus, while there was in Telugu a viable body of opinion in support of vernacularization, the major nativistic forces in Sri Lanka stood by their dedication to the belief that the classical tradition should be upheld.

The linguistic reason for this divergence of attitude in the two communities stems from the character of the classical literary language. As I have already said following Krishnrmurti 1976, the Telugu language of literature had split into two distinct types by the fourteenth century ; one, archaic and ornate, was used for poetry and ornate prose: the other, less archaic and apparently contemporary in idiom was used for popular or local prose. The fact that contemporary usage was admissible for literary purposes even during the Augustan period was of significant impetus to the vernacularization movement. In Sinhalese, on the other hand, the classical divergence was between poetry and prose. (In classical Telugu, where both poetry and prose mingled with each other in the same composition as a characteristic of the *campuu* style, there was no scope for such a divergence.) Although the poetic language in classical Sinhalese was more archaic than the language of prose, it cannot be said that the latter was a representation of the spoken language : both poetry and prose, for example, shared the same syntactic rubric. In revival of classical Sinhalese, therefore, the debate was not so much on whether to be archaic or more contemporary as on whether to use the features of poetry or to use those of prose. The Sinhalese debate divided the participants into two camps : the *Hela havula* or 'the Pure Sinhalese movement' advocated the use of a derived Sinhalese lexicon, thus avoiding

tatsamas ; the opponents of this movement advocated the use of a Sanskritic lexicon for the writing of which the mixed alphabet was to be employed. There were other factors that distinguished these two camps but suffice it to cite this major difference for the present purpose. The rise of the Hela havula was the culmination of the 'poetic language' or 'genuine Sinhalese' campaign. It was headed by a man called Kumaara(na tunga and attracted a small number of second culture intellectuals. Its wider membership, however, was drawn from among the third culture radicals. The 'ornate prose' campaign was promoted by the more orthodox among the nativists. This campaign was already in force when the Hela havula was born-and Kumaara(na)tunga himself wrote in ornate prose during his early career as a writer-but in the context of the forcefulness of the Hela havula movement it took a definitive role. Most Budhist monks and Ayurvedic physicians, for whose vocations the knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali was essential, opposed the 'Pure Sinhalese' notion. The membership of the Hela havula was drawn largely from the school teaching profession and most of them belonged to a specific social class. Their puritanism was restricted to language (that is, excluding such issues as religion) and their role was not, therefore, much admired by the protagonists of the wider cultural renaissance. In this controversy between the languages of prose and poetry, the contemporary vernacular idiom was completely forgotten and no-one was left to defend its rights.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

I have noted in the previous chapter that the absence of a lasting and forceful campaign for vernacularization is a conspicuous factor that distinguishes Sinhalese diglossia from Telugu diglossia. This absence, however, is only superficial. It does not mean that the use of a special grammar for literary purposes has always been accepted without at least some implicit opposition. Nor does it mean that the teaching of literary grammar has been entirely successful and that every pupil acquires a full mastery of the classical usage before he leaves school. On the contrary, an examination of the Sinhalese situation reveals that few writers succeed in maintaining the normative usage without mixing it with the vernacular grammar and idiom (see De Silva 1974a) and that the learning of the classical grammar is viewed by the majority of pupils as an unpalatable experience. Reputed writers have been heard making such curious statements as 'I can write well, but I don't know grammar'. Purists are well aware that a disparity exists between the specified norms and people's performance.

On account of these realities, there exists an undercurrent of unorthodox opinion which does not favour the continuance of this linguistic duality in Sinhalese. In the 1940's the purists and the orthodox scholars thought that, with the introduction of free education up to university level and the gradual spread of Sinhalese as the medium of school instruction and examination, the middle class monopoly on education would disappear and serious Sinhalese learning would thereby prosper. This, however, was an unrealistic aspiration. They were right in so far as free education attracted more and more pupils from peasant and working class homes, However, the majority of these pupils, who stayed on through secondary school, came from homes which were not book-oriented and, therefore had little acquaintance with the classical usage. Contrary to the orthodox expectation, therefore, as more people went to school more discrepancies began to emerge between the pupils' performance and the normative tradition.

Sinhalese pundits discovered to their dismay that even among students who studied in the Sinhalese medium at the university and graduated with Honours in Sinhalese there were some whose mastery of the classical tradition was not beyond reproach. They even conjectured that this reflected a similar deficiency in their teachers' linguistic skills. In fact, in the fifties and the sixties the Sinhalese department of the University of Sri Lanka acceded to a demand by the purists that they should spend part of their teaching time correcting the students' grammar.

The influence of the printing press and the introduction of the modern novel on the writers' attitude to language must not go unnoticed. Writers found that the classical grammatical format was not conducive to portraying contemporary social themes which began to dominate the novel and the short story. They discovered that the spoken idiom which had evolved with the changing needs and circumstances of the society was more suited to expressing certain nuances. I can cite one incident to illustrate this. A famous author once wanted to express the idea 'I was dragged there by the melody of her singing'. He had some difficulty, however, in rendering this in classical grammar. If 'I was dragged' was expressed with the nominative form 'I' and the verb form agreeing with it for number and person, the nature of classical grammar would make it a volitive sentence : such a rendition would conceal the nuance that his being dragged there was involuntary. Passive constructions are odd in classical Sinhalese in any case, so the author could have rendered this idea as 'music dragged me there'. at the expense of being more prosaic. The classical grammar would not allow this, however : music cannot drag a person as it is not animate in gender. He solved this problem by openly violating the normative grammar, expressing 'I' in the accusative and 'was dragged' in the third person singular so as not to show any agreement! (Readers of Saratchandra's novels will have come across this sentence: *sangiitayee haṅDin maa edesaTa adiNa.* I cite this sentence from memory and so am unable to give the reference to it, Saratchandra discussed this problem with me before coming up with his ingenious hybridism.)

There was an even greater significance in the introduction of the printing press. With the appearance of

newspapers and novels as reading material, more and more people began to read. The impact of this had already been felt by the 1940's when free education was introduced. In the context of free education and the gradual Sinhalization of the medium of school instruction. reading habits began to increase and, to satisfy the demand, more and more people took to writing. It is no exaggeration to say that at least fifty per cent of the educated Sinhalese readership has pubiished some book or paper in Sinhalese. There was, then, the inevitable consequence: not all these writers were equally dextrous with the classical grammatical format and some, like Saratchandra, found its inherent inadequacies a positive impediment; in either case, their attempts to stay within the classical tradition resulted in hybridisms of various types. The purists collected these 'errors' and wrote disparaging reviews and so, through fear of being subjected to disrepute in this way, few novelists made an open attempt to write entirely in the vernacular grammar.

It was 1956 before Sinhalese was declared the official language of the state. One of the earliest policy decisions following this declaration was to set up an Official Language Department for 'modernizing' the language for governmental and educational purposes. A few unorthodox scholars and writers, who had been unhappy about the implications of the classical-vernacular division for creativity and learning, thought that the time had come to demonstrate their views more openly. YakkaDuvee Prajñaaraama, a scholar of oriental languages and later a University Professor, had already translated the first two books of the *Pañcatantra* into a type of colloquial Sinhalese and made some introductory remarks on the advantages of writing in the colloquial idiom (Prajñaaraama 1947). Martin Wickramasinghe, perhaps the most prolific Sinhalese novelist of the day, had supported Prajñaaraama in a publication on the craft of literature (Wickramasinghe 1950). Both continued their campaign with added zeal. Senarat Paranavitaana who was then the Commissioner of Archaeology joined them in 1956 by publishing a paper on the relevance of what he called 'the Sinhalese Prakrit' (as opposed to High Sinhalese-following the anology of the Sanskrit-Prakrit dichotomy) (Paranavitaana 1956). I myself lent support to this modest campaign and published five papers between 1958 and 1964: these are reproduced in De Silva 1972. Prajñaaraama and Paranavi-

taana campaigned for the use of the colloquial language for all literary purposes. I thought this idea was unrealistic as it did not recognize register diversity in language, and limited my case to the abandonment of the classical grammatical rubric. These differences in approach and viewpoint, however, are irrelevant for the present purpose. A few novelists joined the campaign and as a result one or two novels appeared entirely in the colloquial grammatical format (e.g. Siri Gunasinha and MaDawala Ratnaayaka). Despite these efforts, the intimidation from the puristic opposition was too strong for the movement to attract a vocal majority and amid dissatisfaction and despair all round the movement (if ever it was one) fell into oblivion. The Official Language Department was dominated by orthodox pundits and in the name of modernization, they Sanskritized the technical vocabulary to a very large extent. Although the officials of this department kept the purists of the Hela havula persuasion at bay, they dampened the above mentioned efforts to vernacularize the written usage.

This commotion had one significant effect, however: it created an atmosphere of linguistic tolerance. Amid fury, the purists now accept as inevitable the fact that writers and school children make 'mistakes' vis-a-vis the classical norms. The less orthodox intelligentsia has learnt to regard these violations of the classical norms as a natural consequence of the influence vernacular usage.

The type of prestige accorded to the classical usage is partly responsible for this atmosphere of tolerance. Unlike classical Tamil and classical Arabic which have prestige by virtue of their religious and cultural significance, classical Sinhalese and classical Telugu have no deep – rooted bondage that would motivate solidarity for their preservation. Classical Sinhalese and classical Telugu are only symbols of erudition, and are thus divisive forces rather than nationally binding symbols. Where the high language has religio-cultural prestige people seldom campaign for its abolition and frequently accept it as superior and as being worthy of emulation. In their efforts to imitate it they often end up with hybridisms, but this is another matter. Where the high language has prestige only by being so labelled by the few for whom it is a mark of meritocratic ascendancy, as it is in Sinhalese and Telugu, the majotity of the population has no real attachment to it. This lack

of association and bondage jeopardizes the chances of its uninterrupted continuation. As I have shown in De Silva 1996a (pp 47–57), this difference in the type of prestige accorded to the classical usage is also reflected in the teaching and examination systems. I shall devote more time to this subject in the next chapter,

I have already said that the debate on the choice of a model for literary use in the Sinhalese situation has been between the purists and the orthodox pundits. They both agree that the classical grammatical format must be maintained in writing, and only differ on the subject of the Sanskritization of the lexis. Since Sinhalese was made the official language, both groups felt that some effective measures should be taken to stem the side of vernacularization in the use of grammar among the writers in general and school children in particular. In 1968, some twelve years after the official language declaration, the then Minister of Education gave heed to their demand and appointed what he called the *sammata siṁyala kamiTuva* 'the Standard Sinhalese Committee'. The Committee s report was published in 1960 (*Sinhalese Report 1969*). Although this committee included a number of well-known orthodox scholars not directly committed to purism (including, for example, the Professor of Sinhalese at the University of Sri Lanka as the Chairman), the report contained only the views expressed by the member, of the Hela havula. The Minister's own desire to fortify the traditional duality of usage was evident in the way he chose the membership of his committee. The purists obviously found in the Minister a suitable candidate for strengthening their already powerful position on the language issue. The publication of the report led to some agitation. The unorthodox scholars of Sinhalese publicly condemned it and in doing so received the support of the orthodox non-purists as well. Numerous public meetings were held by the members of the committee to defend their decision and by their opponents to wage an offensive. The national press gave a wide coverage to the controversy. Despite this agitation the Minister might have gone ahead with implementing the recommendations of the report had it not been for the fact that his government was badly defeated in the general election that followed soon after. As is customary with issues of this nature the incoming government put aside the previous Minister's plan and resolution.

It was widely felt that the Minister made a tactical error in appointing the standard Sinhalese Committee. It may have been a tactical error but it was, to my mind, a necessary thing. There is certainly a state of chaos ptevailing in the Sinhalese schools. Some pupils write in the classical grammar for the most part, some have little ability to use it and some mix it with vernacular grammar in varying ratios. Although none of them actually advocate the use of vernacular grammar, the present - day school grammars, also show some areas of indecision, to say the least. This situation in itself is neither good nor bad, but it makes the teacher's task doubly difficult. He is expected to correct his pupils' grammar which is a thankless task, but he is expected to do this without definite directives on the appropriate model. Because of their training, teachers in the type of school I am now surveying are followers of directives rather than innovators, and from their point of view the Minister's ambition to supply them with specific formats was a welcome gesture.

However, there are two major issues that directives in this regard cannot resolve. Firstly, any directive geared towards achieving full conformity with a model which is alien to the learner is bound to affect creativity. This can be seen in many South Asian schools all the time. In the type of school under survey the expression 'creative writing' has a limited connotation in that the teacher is not trained to allow his pupils full freedom to exercise their linguistic potential and imagination. Composition writing is often a controlled exercise in which the teacher's wishes as to the choice of vocabulary and grammar must prevail. Secondly, the teacher is not always in a position to prevent his own lack of mastery in the normative usage from interfering with his pupils' learning. One is accustomed to seeing teachers who fall into this category bluffing away under the guise of permission for free expression. Customarily, schools condition verbal behaviour towards some kind of standardization. Because of the injunctions given to him by this tradition on the one hand and by the syllabuses on the other, the teacher, regardless of whether he is himself competent or not, is expected not to tolerate diversity of grammatical formats in the written language of his pupils. The committee might, therefore, have taken the opportunity offered to them to examine

the general trends in contemporary writing and set the standards accordingly. With the orthodoxy by which they were all guided, they were unaware of this need. The most striking factor in this whole saga is that not a single committee member stood up for the use of vernacular grammmar in school writings.

The Telugu situation, however, has been different all along in this particular regard. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the argument in Telugu has not been between the language of poetry and the language of prose, but between the archaic language and the more contemporary usage. The vernacular idiom had been used for literary purposes as early as 1897 (Appa Rao 1897) and, as I have shown before, there has been a long tradition of intellectual opinion campaigning for vernacularization. The effect of this, as far as teaching and examining are concerned was the recognition of the vernacular by the examination authorities. On September 29, 1912, by an order from the Secretary to the School-Final Board, Madras, schools were given freedom to opt for answering examinations either in the classical usage or in the modern usage, The relevant extract of this circular reads

"That the pupils in Telugu will be examined on the supposition that they write modern or classical Telugu according to the declara tion of the school they come from..."

(Circular no 3098 dated 29.9.1912)

A month later, on October 29th. the Secretary clarified the meaning of 'modern Telugu':

"By 'modern Telugu, the Board means language of the kind used in such books as Brown's Reader, the first part of Arden's Telugu Grammar and Enugula Veeraswamiya's *Kasiyaatra Charitram*. Schools which do not favour this kind of Telugu need make no declaration."

(Circular no. 3479, dated 29.10.1912)

The same circular clarifies more fully the position with regard to the choice of style for examination purposes.

"It was reported to the Board that one and the same school proposed to send up some pupils of the school in Classical Telugu and

the remaing pupils in 'modern' Telugu. It is the desire of the Board that all the pupils belonging to a school should be examined alike, that is, in classical Telugu alone or in Modern Telugu alone, not in both...there is thus to be only one entry under Telugu-against Classical Telugu or against Modern Telugu.

This second part of the directive was, however, revised by a further order dated January 10, 1913, in order to allow full freedom of choice to individual students. It is obvious that the campaign for vernacularization was well under way. The circular reads :

"It having come to the notice of the President of the School Leaving Certificate Board that there are good grounds for individual pupils writing in a style differing from that of the majority of pupils for a school, heads of institutions are informed in modification of Circular No. 3479, dated 29-10-1912, that all pupils will be required in the Examination to mark their answer books 'Modern' or 'Classical' and that their answers will be valued accordingly. This will admit of the same pupil answering papers in different styles as well as of pupils from the same school using different styles."

(Circular No. 20, dated 10-1-1913)

While this gradual progress towards vernacularization was gathering momentum, the protagonists of the classical usage launched an active campaign to force the authorities to rescind their orders. Their efforts were rewarded when. on February 22, 1915, a Government Order was issued saying

"A controversy arose sometime ago between two sections of the Telugu people as to whether the 'Classical' or 'Modern' style should prevail in Telugu literature generally and be the language of Telugu school readers in particular. In 1912-13 the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Board on the representation of some school managers and headmasters issued two circulars for the guidance of candidates appearing for the public examination conducted by the body. While the first circular declares that all pupils belonging to a school would be examined alike, i. e. either in 'Classical' or in 'Modern' Telugu, the second modified the first and

allowed each pupil to answer his paper in any style he liked. The issue of these circulars was subsequently brought to the notice of the Government, but no steps were immediately taken in the matter, as it was considered desirable to await the result of the deliberations of the committee which the syndicate of the Madras University has appointed to consider the possibility of fixing a standard for composition in Telugu for the Intermediate examination. The Committee having lately submitted its report and the Syndicate having thereupon decided that it is not in a position to recognise what is known as 'Modern' Telugu, for University purposes, the Director of Public Instruction will be requested to arrange for the withdrawal of the circular referred to supra."

(Govt. Order No. 196, dated 12-2-1915)

(All these relevant circulars are also reproduced in *Modern Telugu Papers* 1914, *Telugu Report* 1973 and Krishnamurti 1976).

This directive to schools did not mean that the campaign for the use of contemporary Telugu for journalists and literary purposes ceased. On the contrary, its use spread unhampered. The *Telugu Report* 1973 (p 20) summarizes the landmarks in this use of the vernacular as follows :

"Undaunted by the reverses he encountered, G. V. Ramamurti carried on his relentless crusade against the use of the classical language by travelling extensively, lecturing before public and academic audiences. Through the columns of the journal *Telugu* which he started in 1919, he published articles and speeches of of abiding interest on this issue. In 1924, The Andhra Sahitya Parishat officially abandoned their hostility to the *vyaavahaarika* (vernacular) style. In 1936 a new literary association called Navya Sahitya Parishat was established with its own journal *Pratibha* with the avowed object of supporting the use of *vyaavahaarika* in creative literature. In 1937 *Janavaani* a Telugu daily was established under the Editorship of Tapi Dharmarao which used modern standard language only in editorials and news reports. A week before his death Sri G. V. Ramamurti Pantulu addressed the Editors of Telugu newspapers when he expressed great satisfaction at the spread of Modern Telugu in all means of comunication. He,

however, deplored the obstinacy of the Education Department of the Government and the University which alone sheltered the classical language in textbooks prescribed for study. He made a fervent appeal to them to fall in line with the times."

Thus, although as a consequence of the Government Order referred to above there was a general malaise on the education scene, efforts for vernacularization were being made elsewhere. These efforts led to a reopening of the discussion after the State of Andhra Pradesh was set up and Telugu declared the official language of the State. The appointment of a Telugu Language Committee by the Andhra University, Waltair was an important landmark in the history of this problem. *Telugu Report* 1973, the full title of which is *A Report Submitted to the Andhra University by the Telugu Language Committee on the use of Modern Standard Telugu* (*SishTavyaavahaarika*) *for Teaching and Examinations for all University Courses* resulted from the deliberations of this Committee.

The Committee's terms of reference were as follows :

1. Whether the present instruction in the Telugu language is adequate for the student to meet the modern academic needs and for expression in the various roles he has to play in the society.

2. Whether *vyaavahaarika* (vernacular) should be studied under the discipline of Telugu language and Literature at the College and University levels.

3. Whether recognition of *vyaavahaarika* would create problems of standardization and, if so, what methods the Committee would suggest to solve them.

4. Whether *graanthika* (classical) should still continue for all or some purposes at all or some levels, or none.

5. Whether books written in *vyaavahaarika* should be prescribed under the categories of modern prose, drama and novel to make the selection representative of modern literature and the guide-lines for such prescription.

(*Telugu Report* 1973 ; p 2)

The Committee agreed that Telugu instruction in the State is inefficient at present and that changes must be introduced. The form of Telugu that should be studied at the College and University levels, they felt, was *vyaavahaarika* or standard vernacular. For identifying the standard, the prescription of certain guide-lines was recommended. The classical literary usage was not to be abandoned altogether: various types of classical literary works would continue to be studied at the University. And, finally, books written in modern standard vernaculars should be prescribed under the category of the study of modern literature in order to make the selection of prescribed texts representative. The Committee also "Resolved to recommend to the University to have *sishTavyaavahaarika* (standard vernacular) alone as the medium for all the Telugu examinations conducted by the University and for research dissertations in Telugu."

(*Telugu Report* 1973; p 5)

To enable a gradual switch-over to standard vernacular or 'Modern' the following scheme was recommended for examination purposes;

	Bachelor's Course		*Master's Course (Telugu)*		
	I year	II year	III year	IV year	V year
1973	Modern	Option	Option	Option	Option
1974	Modern	Modern	Option	Option	Option
1975	Modern	Modern	Modern	Option	Option
1976	Modern	Modern	Modern	Modern	Option
1977	Modern	Modern	Modern	Modern	Modern

(*Telugu Report* 1973: p 6)

It is obvious that, although they had similar historical origins, the Sinhalese and Telugu diglossias have gone their separate ways with regard to the importance attached to the classical usage. They may not be so different underneath, but on the surface the expressed opinions are differently weighted. The impact on education is determined largely by openly declared standpoints. and we shall see in the next chapter how the performance of school pupils in the two communities differ at the present time.

CHAPTER 6

SOME PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

In my studies in South Asian school situations, I have conducted certain tests to observe the effect of diglossia on creativity on the one hand and examination performance on the other. These tests conducted in schools in Tamilnadu (for Tamil), Karnataka (for Kannada) and Sri Lanka (for Sinhalese) have already been reported in summary form in De Silva 1976a. In this chapter I propose to relate those earlier results to the results of the same tests replicated later in some Telugu schools. While, of necessity, I shall repeat some of the statements made in this regard in De Silva 1976a, I shall endeavour to comment on the comparability of the Telugu situation in some detail.

In all the communities I have examined in South Asia, text book learning is given a very important place in the education curriculum. Even five and six year old children do a fair amount of homework in reading and arithmetic each day and the parents are expected by the system to help with this work. Some children memorize diligently and some know their first primer by heart before going to school. Among those who memorize the first book in this way, there are some who are not necessarily capable of identifying individual words or pronouncing them in isolation. The teacher often interprets this as 'knowing the text'; the repercussions of this on the child's learning are obvious. The entire phenomenon is, of course, circular The parents expect the children to be taught book knowledge at school and the teachers set the class work in order to achieve this parental objective. The children are not always encouraged to discover, make and enquire; this is especially so in rural schools, and memorizing forms an integral part of learning even at the university level. A concomitant factor of this slavishness and allegiance to the written word from the first day at school is that at school every child is required to read everything that is written in his reading exercises. He is required to pronounce every single letter including those that are superfluous from the stand-point of the phonemic structure of his vernacular language but are there because of the

diglossic situation. The grammar, i. e. inflections and rules of concord and so forth, being different in the written language, the child is neither able nor encouraged to read the sentences with an intonation that would be appropriate for their spoken counterparts that are familiar to him. Many parents make their children memorize whole reading passages which at school they rattle off parrot-fashion and also extremely fast. As the written language is distinct from his own spoken usage, the teacher is not always able to identify the pronunciation errors in his pupils' fast readings: my experience has shown that in a number of instances where the teacher has confessed to having heard the distinct but related pronunciations prescribed for different letters the pupil has never made such a distinction in his pronunciation : I refer particularly to the various sibilants, the nasal consonants and, in Tamil, the r-type sounds. These features I have described in this paragraph are, probably symptomatic of all diglossic communities: they must not be interpreted as an implied criticism of teaching techniques in general.

I have given this preamble in order to focus on the important place reading has in the Indian child's early learning. The language that the child is made to read and write mostly is the literary variety. (Some sentences in the Kindergarten readers may contain a few sentences which resemble the colloquial variety but they are only an extremely small proportion.) This situation is, however, more relaxed in Telugu. During their thirteen or fourteen years at school before going to university and then for three or four years at the university pupils are exposed to a great deal of high language. They read it and, when they write in their mother tongue, they write it. The irony, however, is that, in spite of this extensive training, it has been found that these people are not always able to perform in full accordance with the norms prescribed for the literary usage. I have commented on this phenomenon earlier in the book. As I have said in De Silva 1976a, the Kannada situation is slightly relaxed and one could in such a context legitimately expect a writer to represent the colloquial grammar and phonology in his writing. In Tamil, however, the division is very rigidly upheld and it is generally believed that secondary school children and university students do not violate the normative literary rules. Despite this belief experiments have shown that even Tamil language graduates violate specified norms and in fact Shanmugam Pillai (1965)

shows tendencies toward a merger between the two varieties in certain circumstances. I have already drawn a distinction between *belief* and reality earlier in the book.

The significance of all this is that the maintenance of the linguistic duality involved in these instances is an extra burden on the learner. Notwithstanding this, many native speakers of these languages want to restrict the term 'literate' only to refer to persons who are able to read and write *correctly* according to specified norms. These normative literary rules apply to spelling and grammar. The opinions, however, vary in the four communities in a significant way: this variation seems to be a result of the differences in the definition of prestige in the four communities (De Silva 1974b) and has an influence on the degree of 'correctness' that people expect and are able to observe in their reading and writing. In a survey conducted to study the social expectations of literacy (and thereby the social definition) I have obtained some revealing results which I summarize below. The persons chosen for this survey had all completed their secondary school education and ranged from the B. A. first year (in India the so-called pre-university first year) students to professionals holding doctoral degrees, including some Ph. D's in the language in question. They belonged to different occupational categories such as clerks, teachers, lecturers, businessmen, civil servants and university students. They had all gone through the machinery for acquiring sufficient literacy as required by their communities. Between sixty and one hundred were questioned in each community. Illiterate persons and school children were not included in this particular survey: among other things the illiterates are not able to pass judgement on matters like literacy and would generally be happy to be guided by established opinion; school children would not always be able to give dispassionate answers because they have the habit of generating prejudices for or against matters pertaining to their school curriculum. The percentage of results with regard to correctness were as follows:

	Tamil	*Kannada*	*Sinhalese*	*Telugu*
1. 'Literacy' is the ability to read and write correctly	100	50	30	20

2. 'Correctness' means the correct rules of spelling and grammar	99	45	15	10
3. 'Literacy' is the mere ability to read and write	0	50	50	70
4. Unable to decide between 1 and 3	0	0	20	10

As the above figures show, every one out of a hundred people questioned in Tamilnadu wanted to define literacy as the ability to read and write *correctly*: correctness was defined by ninety-nine as correct adherence to the rules of spelling and grammar as specified for the high variety. (The one that differed was concerned with correct spelling only). Ideas were less settled in the Kannada community. In Karnataka, 50% wanted to define literacy as the ability to read and write correctly, defining correctness as the correct adherence to the normative literary rules. An equal proportion was, however, happy to settle for the mere ability to read and write the letters of the alphabet as the definition of literacy. Among those who defined literacy as the ability to read and write correctly, the majority (45% of all those who were questioned) wanted the literates to observe correct rules of spelling as well as grammar while 5% was happy to restrict the meaning of correctness to spelling only.

This divergence of opinion corresponds to the more relaxed attitude to diglossia among the Kannada speakers. In spite of this attitude to correctness the overwhelming majority wanted to retain the teaching of the high variety in schools. Contrasting with both Tamil and Kannada the Sinhalese response was divided significantly in favour of the mere ability to read and write rather than the ability to read and write *correctly*: while only 30% wanted *correct* reading and writing ability; 50% wanted no more than the ability to read and write as the attribute of a literate individual Even among the orthodox 30% there was no unanimity on the definition of correctness. One half of them implied by correctness 'correct Sinhalese usage' (not specifying it as literary or colloquial) which is not adulterated by foreign language influence. They were particularly concerned with the influence of the English idiom on Sinhalese usage through the Sinhalese writings (and the Sinhalese

speech) of the English educated persons. All in all then, only 15% wanted the literates in the community to be proficient in the normative literary usage. It is significant that 20% felt that, in the climate of present day polemics on the subject, a decisive answer was not possible.

The Telugu results reflect most definitely the repercussions of the long campaign for vernacularization. It is obvious that the vast majority that opted for 'mere ability to read and write' interpreted that phrase as the opposite of the retention of the classical tradition, Ten percent, however, held the view that some standards of correctness must be upheld, although not everyone in this category interpreted the 'standard' in terms of classicisms : for some, 'standard' meant *sishTavyaavahaarika* or standardized (i. e. dialectally undifferentiated) vernacular.

The reader will find that there is a striking difference in attitudes between the Tamil community on the one hand and the Sinhalese and Telugu communities on the other. The Telugu community is even less conservative than the Sinhalese. These results relate clearly to the definition of sociolinguistic prestige in these communities.

In Tamil, the ability to use the high variety is associated with social superiority and intimacy with the Tamil heritage. Formerly, the high variety of Tamil was almost identical with the formal, educated speech which showed much Sanskrit influence. The Brahmin speech has also been defined as highly Sanskritized. Since the ascendance of she Dravida MunneTra Kazagam the Brahmins have been forced out of their prestige place in the society and, along with this, the high language has been stripped of some of its Sanrkritic lexis: however, this has not made the language any closer to the colloquial speech, for more archaic features have been introduced into the language by the DMK philosophy in its quest for pure Tamil culture and language. The diglossic character has, therefere, not been affected by the State's political changes, and the high variety is still looked up to with the same respect and awe. (As I have reported before from the experience of two persons, even the uneducated people expect the more sophisticated people to use the prestige language on approipriate occasions.)

The Sinhalese practice is different from this. Not being a spoken language, literary Sinhalese has no class or caste or any other similar overtones. Although historically speaking literary Sinhalese is a resurrected variety of language that belonged to the 14th century (supra), the polemics on the 'purity' of Sinhalese have ensured that the literary variety is not widely recognized as the symbol of the Sinhalese heritage. In the circumstances the ability to use literary Sinhalese correctly only reflects the person's erudition in the Sinhalese language. Among the Sinhalese educated élite there are at least three points of view on the character of literary Sinhalese. There are the purists who clamour for the use of 'pure Sinhalese' phonology and lexis in the framework of literary grammar: while the purists want the Sanskritic and other foreign elements out, there are others who have no aversion to Sanskritic lexis and phonological representation, and would in fact encourage them, but with in the accepted normative literary grammar: there is, in addition, a small third group that regards the special literary features as irrelevant and cumbersome and, therefore, campaigns for the abolition of the present linguistic duality. Unlike in the case of Tamil, the ability to use the literary variety correctly is not associated with an intimate knowledge of, or a passionate belonging to, the glorious past culture of the people. The indecision reflected in the answers given by 20% is a direct result of this lack of unanimity among the Sinhalese èlite on this matter.

While it has many features in common with Sinhalese diglossia' both in its origin and its structure, and therefore has the same attitudes to prestige as Sinhalese, Telugu diglossia has been under scrutiny for a long time. The situation has been kept under survey both by the education authorities and the local linteligentsia. This culminated in the decision of the Andhra University to appoint a committee to investigate the situation yet again, and as the *Telugu Report* 1973 shows there is a definite and widespread belief that the classical usage imposes undesirable constraints upon both writers and school children. The overall relaxation of the use of the high variety is reflected in the Telugu statistics.

My questionnaires were in the respective languages. Among other things I was interested in finding out to what extent the people's definition of literacy was compatible with their own

performance in the literary variety (e.g. did those people who expected the literates to know the 'correct' usage and professed to know it themselves actually perform 'correctly'). With this in view I designed some questions to elicit long answers (of the type 'why do you think so', 'explain why', 'what is your own opinion', etc.). The answers I received to such questions contained two to five sentences each and the total number of sentences formed a fair quantity on which the subjects' capabilities in the language could be assessed. What these sentences revealed was that people's expectations of literacy and their educational qualifications were not clear predictors of their own proficiency in the literary language. A person may declare that literacy is the ability to read and write correctly according to specified norms; he may say, with some pride that he experienced no difficulty in mastering the literary grammar at school in a short span of, say, two years; he may possess a B.A. degree in the respective language; he may be one who has little patience with those who violate the normative rules of literary usage: yet he can make an average of one grammatical mistake for every two sentences and a spelling mistake for every three sentences. The following is a summary of such errors (the mistakes I have counted are those identified by groups of teachers who served as assessors during my survey). Notice, however, the situation in Telugu.

Tamil:

100% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.
Total number of sentences written in answers : 170
Average of mistakes – grammar : 1 for every 4 sentences
– spelling : 1 for every 3 sentences

Kannada:

50% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.
Total number of sentences written in answers ; 121
Average of mistakes – grammar : 1 for every 2 sentences
– spelling : 1 for every 3 sentences

(There were 8 instances which appeared to be spelling mistakes but might also have been inadvertent slips of pen due to the

similarity in shape of some letters of the alphabet. I have not counted these.)

50% did not want correctness to be part of the definition
Total number of sentences written in answers ; 108
Average of mistakes – grammar : 1 for every 2 sentences
– spelling : 1 per sentence

Sinhalese :

30% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.
Total number of sentences written in answers ; 88
Average of mistakes – grammar : 1 per sentence
– spelling : 1 per sentence

70% did not want correctness to be part of the definition.
Total number of sentences written in answers : 102
Average of mistakes – grammar : 3 for every 2 sentences
– spelling : 1 per sentence,

Telugu :

20% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.
Total number of sentences written in answers : 84
Average of mistakes – grammar : nil
– spelling : .024 per sentence (i.e. only 2 in all)

80% did not want correctness to be part of the definition.
Total number of sentences written : 146
Average of mistakes – grammar : nil
– spelling : nil

The implication of these figures will be discussed later. What is significant is that there is in Tamil, Kannada and Sinhalese communities a fair body of people who profess to know the correct usage' and to follow it but who show that their actual performance does not measure up to their beliefs in their own abilities. It is necessary to enquire into the reasons for this. The primary school teachers in these languages are not in complete agreement about

the time it usually takes for a child to master the literary grammar and spelling, but they all agree that, by the time the child is ready to leave the primary school i. e. age 11), he will have mastered the rules of grammar and spelling, leaving only the lexicon to be acquired gradually as he goes along. The above figures, based on the performance of adults contradict this belief. In the primary school there are five standards or grades. Some teachers believe that the child is capable of manipulating the literary variety in the third standard, some the fourth standard and some the fifth. These statements are very much tied to whether the teaching of the language in the primary school is in the hands of one teacher or many teachers. If the responsibility is in the hands of one teacher, he or she usually plays safe by raising the time to the fifth standard. Where the responsibility is shared by many, the customary thing is to pass the buck: statements like 'it will be done next year', it should have been done last year, it is too late now'. etc. have often been made. I do not think that these attitudes necessarily reflect the teachers' incompetence or indecision; the teaching of the high variety has been done for decades and the textbooks and the teaching methods have evolved alongside this experience. The problem, as I have attempted to show in my analysis elsewhere (De Silva 1976: pp61–102), is rather due to the relationship of the literary variety to the child's spoken usage. I do not wish in any way to put the entire blame for all problems of literacy on the diglossic character of these languages, but I am convinced that diglossia makes the acquisition of literacy more diffcult than it ought to be and causes indecisions and diffidence in the use of language, This inhibits the child's free expression and creativity,

It is obvious that the Telugu assessors I employed were used to accepting that vernacularisms are as correct as classicisms. Such comments as 'This is correct but not classical', 'This is a classical form' have been made by them in answer to my queries, but they were equally tolerant of both. Some of my assessors were school teachers: they marked the work of pupils they did not know and of pupils other than their own. This tolerance among the school teachers is a significant feature in the Telugu literacy scene. The 'mistakes' I have counted with the help of my assessors are not, therefore, reflections of people's inability to use their own language but indications of what yardsticks are used to measure good usage.

This difference between Telugu and other communities can also be discerned in the assessments I have made in proficiency of primary school pupils.

I have attempted to assess the primary school children's proficiency in the literary usage as well as the rate of increase in their proficiency by giving them five tasks, namely, reading of known and unseen texts, taking dictation of unseen texts and writing of three free compositions. These tests showed not only that, in Tamil, Kannada and Sinhalese schools, the children were not anywhere near full proficiency in the literary language by the time they were 11 or 12, but also that their rate of progress was slow in comparison to their rate of progress (that was more easily assessable), say, in mathematics. As an illustration of the errors the fourth and fifth standard children made in these texts, I have taken, at random, ten one-page free compositions written by them in each language and tabulated the errors as follows. Notice, again, the difference in Telugu.

Tamil :

79 errors	
Wrong spelling	40
Wrong inflection	15
Wrong word	6
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	6
Colloquial words	12

Kannada :

153 errors	
Wrong spelling	85
Wrong inflection	15
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	23
Colloquial words	24
Wrong word	6

Sinhalese :

197 errors	
Wrong spelling	92
Wrong inflection or wrong postposition	26

Wrong word	2
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	49
Colloquial words	28

Telugu :

5 errors	
Wrong spelling	1
Mixing classical inflection with colloquial base	4

It was clear in the Telugu situation that my assessors did not want to brand features as classical or vernacular unless specifically asked, or unacceptable admixtures of the two occurred in the writings. It appeared that this freedom allowed a significant latitude for innovation and free expression. The Telugu compositions I examined were certainly more entertaining and creative than most compositions from other schools.

Before I leave the subject of free composition, I must define what free composition means in most of these school situations. Free composition here does not mean writings of children's own choice and imagination which would give vent to their innovative nature. In my experience, the teacher first sets one or more essay topics (e.g. the coconut palm, the happiest day of my life); then he usually writes on the blackboard some useful (literary) expressions that may be used and also some notes on concord, etc. Some teachers give a skeleton of the essay on the blackboard. The entire operation appears not so much an exercise in creativity as an exercise in literary usage. The mistakes I have counted as above were made in spite of this training. In the Telugu schools, on the other hand, this practice was not prevalent. Full freedom was allowed in most cases and the results were the better for it.

If, after thirty or forty hours a week of exposure to a variety of language for over four years, the average performance of a child is no better than I have found and described: if the social expectations of literacy are not altogether compatible with the performance of the literacy learner, or indeed of the proponents of the high literacy ideals: if a social attitude enmeshed in such incompatibility creates a state of tension (De Silva 1974a, 1974b : Shanmugam Pillai 1972) that is not in the best interests of creativity: then the

system that gives rise to these circumstances might not be the ideal one to perpetuate for the accomplishment of literacy as 'an ability to express oneself articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually and vocationally both in speech and writing: to command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment and enrichment and to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as well as to what is written' (Goddard 1974, p 21). The teaching methods in these communities might need revision, but it would not be realistic to apportion full blame on the teaching methods or, indeed, the syllabuses. It is my contention that the circumstances and conditions of usage are not favourable enough for most persons to internalize the literary language (in any sense of the term 'internalize') to the point of having a full command of it. Where a form of language has a restricted function in the society, leaving little opportunity for the learner to use it fully, frequently and in a wide variety of circumstances, that language will always be comparatively alien to him; his personal spoken language which he constantly uses in every normal circumstance will exercise its powers more to block the individual's familiarization with this alien form than to facilitate it. Colloquialisms that have infiltrated the writings of many authors and hybridisms created by many in their writings (De Silva 1974a; Shanmugam Pillai 1965, 1972) are far more numerous than the literary influences on the speech habits of any section of the population: any influence of the literary language on speech is primarily lexical and is the result of extensive reading.

The history of the diglossic situations under survey shows that the high varieties in all four are not natural to the communities. They have been imposed upon their normal linguistic habits by revivalists who have, in the name of cultural renaissance and standarization, resurrected linguistic forms which are several centuries older. Their over-all structure is outside the linguistic competence that the individuals display in their speech behaviour as grown up members of the community (De Silva 1976a).

The relaxatian of the use of classical grammar has penetrated into the Telugu schools. Some teachers still believe that the classical usage alone must be used in schools as the prestige form of language but they tolerate the less archaic language that their pupils write. Some teachers, on the other hand, are totally unware of the terms

graanthika (literary or classical) and *vyaavahaarika* (vernacular) that refer to the two modes of language. The campaigns for making the literary language less archaic (*saraLa graanthika* 'simplified literary') and for literary purposes *SishTavyaavahaarika* 'standard vernacular,) have blurred the differences between the two modes except in extreme cases. Because of this, the concurrence of both (or all four) styles in a pupil's composition is tolerated in every school. The most significant consequence of this is that, except where the teacher wishes to inculcate the classical idiom, prior notes are rarely given to guide the pupil's compositions. Pupils write freely and show imaginativeness and creativity and are judged for their power of expression more than for their use of grammar. The feedback from the teacher in these cases has little inhibiting influence. In contrast to the other situations I have examined and reported above and in De Silva 1976a, the Telugu experiment may, therefore, be said to have begun to bear fruit. This particular point of view is shared equally by many teachers and journalists I have had the occassion to consult, but it is not, of course, universally acclaimed in the Telugu intellectual community.

CONCLUSION

As I have attempted to show early in the book, illiterate societies where the level of literacy is low - that is to say where literacy is confined to a small segment of the population - usually create a social paradox. The literacy statistics being quantitatively low, and the values, attitudes and some modes of communication being literacy oriented, there is an obvious need to spread literacy rapidly and effectively. On the other hand, the literacy targets that the literate minority adopts being far beyond the reach of the illiterate masses, the gap between the literates and the illiterates widens all the time instead of narrowing. Where there is such a wide gap, the illiterates do not see any social relevance in the content or in the form of literacy. Paying little regard to this, the literate meritocracy attempts to maintain a monopoly on literary activity in various ways, particularly by adopting exclusive standards and elevating the formal characteristics of literacy to the status of a revealed norm for correct linguistic behaviour. Stratified societies in which social mobility and social merger are difficult if not totally disallowed are particularly vulnerable to this state of affairs.

It must be understood, however, that diglossia is not the only cause or even the main cause - of high level illiteracy in India. One main cause of the very low level of necessary litercy is the absence of effective machinery to enforce the law of universal schooling up to a stipulated age. In a small polity like Sri Lanka, the government is able to enforce such a law successfully and punish the law breakers without incurring too much expense. To do likewise in India would be cumbersome and involve a very elaborate bureaucracy. The so called high level of literacy in Sri Lanka is largely due to the effectiveness of the enforcement of the law. I say the 'so called' literacy because the high figure provided by Sri Lanka statistics is a necessary literacy figure and not a figure revealing the level of sufficient literacy.

There are other reasons too, which contribute to the aversion toward literacy that obtains in the peasant population. In India,

the poor peasantry is at the lowest end of various scales of socail stratification. They are often very poor, low-caste folk with no one in their neighbourhood who has had the benefit of book education. It is not easy to convince a person living in such an ervironment that he has the potential to achieve a standard of social living that he knows is beyond him and belongs to the richer and more educated folk, often of higher castes. They are obsessed with the belief that education is for 'others' and not for themselves and come to terms with their lot. They do not despair that they are educationally deprived. They may despair that they are economically deprived, but do not see a connection between the two. It is necessary to examine from time to time how literacy is understood as a divisive force in this way. Diglossia is one of the channels through which this social division materialises.

While universal *necessary* literacy can be achieved by legislative and persuasive means, *sufficient* literacy can only be achieved by personal motivation. To motivate a person to achieve a standard of literacy of the type that Nora Goddard defines, the language of literacy must remain within the learner's experience. In the diglossias I have examined, the achievement of sufficient literacy is impaired by the continued use of linguistic forms that are alien to the learner. The relevance of language experience in learning literacy has been emphasised by educational sociologists before. With literacy having been a middle-class monopoly in the past, educational systems the world over have evolved around middle-class values and attitudes, These values including language use often contrast with the experiences of the working class or peasant child. The communication modes that the schools attempt to inculcate in the learners and the media of information-gathering that the schools provide are alien to the socially oppressed child (Bernstein 1973). The effectiveness of the classroom as a learning atmosphere has been questioned particularly on the grounds of teacher-pupil interaction (Barnes 1969). Education reformers have criticised the role of the school as a knowledge-bank which involves minimal pupil participation (Freire 1970), All these problems occur, in a greatly accentuated form, in the South Asian diglossias I have commented on.

As my statistics reveal, school teachers who maintain that the teaching of the high variety of language is a necessary part of the

school curriculum do not achieve full success even after a number of years of teaching. This is not only a waste of time: it also frustrates the learner who is continually confronted with his supposedly 'wrong' use of language. The Telugu experiment shows that a reduction of the emphasis on the high variety of language can successfully save time and combat frustration, thereby encouraging free expression and creativity. The majority of the Telugu children I tested wrote freely and imaginatively, worrying little as to whether their grammar and spelling were conventional or not. The teachers likewise penalised them little for using the non-classical language. The society and the school condition each other with regard to the values that must be upheld. A part at least of the Telugu society is aware that the classical usage is irrelevant for modern writing, and this allows the school teachers to relax their goals. However, there is still, particularly among the illiterates, a strong belief that classicism alone is the correct usage and that it is beyond the reach of the average person. Only time will change this situation. It is therefore too early to expect a drastic increase in the level of literacy or a change of heart in favour of literacy.

I have written this book, not to tell the Telugus of their situation, but to make a sociolinguistic appraisal of the case history of Telugu diglossia in the South Asian context and to make a comparison with its closest counterpart: Sinhalese, for the outside reader in the hope that it will be of some significance for our wider study of purism in literacy. Joshua Fishman's following remarks which capture the relationship of the school to language are a fitting conclusion to my brief survey:

> There is sufficient evidence now to indicate that schooling as the primary support for language maintenance is a very iffy business. Language, to live, must exist in the area of some protected, natural function : home, church, or the economic organization of life. If school is to become an influence in the preservation of a language, it has to have the language strongly and certainly there, with parental and other types of monitoring consciousness, so that the school has but to reinforce rather than to be the pillar itself.
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> Reported by Thomas Lyon (1977 : p7)

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